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WASHINGTON.

WASHINGTON

BY
François (Pierre Guillaume)

MONSIEUR GUIZOT,

MEMBER OF THE INSTITUTE, AMBASSADOR OF FRANCE.

TRANSLATED

BY HENRY REEVE, ESQ.

LONDON:

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THE Essay on the Life and Character of Washington, which this volume contains, was prefixed by Monsieur Guizot to the French translation of the collected Writings of Washington, where it stands as the introduction to that work. As it has not been separately published, and as the original cannot be procured except in connection with the voluminous translation of a book, which is more likely to become familiar to the English reader in the lan-

guage of Washington himself than in the French version, it has not been thought a work of superfluous labour to clothe this introductory notice in an English dress.

The less so, indeed, as it may serve to introduce amongst ourselves a more extensive acquaintance with the original collection of Washington's Writings, to which it may be said to belong. That collection, with one illustrious exception, is the most perfect literary record we possess of the thoughts and actions of a man of the highest eminence. Like the Despatches of the Duke of Wellington, it exhibits the life of the writer in

its actual course; it enshrines the occurrences, purposes, and doubts of the hour, in a monument of imperishable duration; and it sets in the full light of truth one other character, perhaps the only other in modern history, which never sought or needed to cast a shadow of obscurity over any incident of a long and arduous career. In these memorials of Washington, indeed, there is more of the entire man: the confidences of friendship, the melancholy or the pleasantries of private intimacy, the outpourings of a retiring mind, reluctant to be great: in the published papers of the Duke of Wellington, the whole is action. But, although it be as much beside my purpose as it is beyond

my powers to attempt to trace the parallel suggested by these two great publications, yet I cannot wholly pass in silence that quality of English virtue (if virtues be of any race or nation) which in either character shines with such signal splendour : I mean that inflexible sense of duty, that forbearing manliness, that fixed integrity, and that serenity through good and evil times, mixed with the minor qualities of attention to detail, affability, and precision in all things, which go to make up the character of an English gentleman.


Nor can I sufficiently admire the penetration and the taste with which the illustrious author of these pages has traced

and described the character of a life which, as an historian, none is more qualified to judge.—as a statesman, none more wont to emulate; for, if I was led but now to call the virtues of Washington English virtues, I would imply by the term no arrogant distinction of qualities peculiar to our country, but whatever has shown itself simplest in manners, strongest in purpose, and most strenuous in integrity amongst public men.

Happy the time we live in, if we can discard the tradition of former dissensions, in spite of actual differences of opinion, and record the past disputes of England and her colonies—of England and her

ancient rival,—not in the spirit of perpetuated discord, but in that of united admiration for the high minds and honest actions which have made even such dissensions glorious to human nature, and useful to mankind.

I am but too well aware that the work of translation usually robs a composition of the edge and polish of its style ; and I cannot hope to have preserved the original merit of so eloquent and finished a performance : but this copy has had the rare advantage of being retouched by the hand of the author, who has condescended to revise it ; and whilst I acknowledge Monsieur Guizot's kindness with becoming



gratitude and deference, I am sure it will give a value to this translation which it could not otherwise have possessed.

I have annexed to the Essay some fragments from the original Washington papers, which had not before been republished in England; and the extracts introduced into the text have been considerably lengthened.

H. R.

RICHMOND,

June 23, 1840.

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WASHINGTON.

Two things, alike arduous and great, are a part of the duty, and may constitute the glory, of man—the one, to endure misfortune with the firmness of resignation ; the other, to trust in a good cause with persevering confidence. A sight as fine, and not less edifying than that of a virtuous man struggling with adversity, is that of a virtuous man at the head of a good cause, and ensuring its success.

If ever cause was just or worthy to succeed, it was that of the British Colonies in their insurrection to become the United States of America.

That insurrection was preceded by resistance : that resistance was justified by circumstances and the rights of history—by principles and the rights of reason.

It is the glory of England that she implanted beside the cradle of her colonies, the germ of their freedom. They were almost all, at the time of their foundation, or shortly afterwards, endowed with charters which conferred upon them the liberties of the mother-country : and these charters were no dead letter or empty show, for they established or recognised institutions which were no mean incentives to the defence of public freedom, and to control the supreme power by dividing it—the vote of supplies, the election of the great public councils, trial by jury, and the right of association and debate for the common weal.

Indeed, the history of these colonies is but the practical and laborious development of the spirit

of freedom, under the shadow of tutelary laws and national traditions: it might be taken for the history of England herself. And this analogy is the more signal from the fact, that the American colonies, or at least the greater part and the most considerable amongst them, were founded, or chiefly extended, at the very time when England was preparing for, or already engaged in, those fierce struggles against the assumptions of absolute power, which were by their event to confer on her the honour of giving to the world the first instance of a great people well governed and free.

From 1578 to 1704, under Elizabeth, James I., Charles I., the Long Parliament, Cromwell, Charles II., James II., William III., and Queen Anne, the charters of Virginia, Massachusetts, Maryland, Carolina, and New York, were alternately recognised, contested, curtailed, enlarged, lost, and restored—ever exposed to those struggles and those vicissitudes which are inherent in the con-

dition and in the very essence of freedom ; for free nations may aspire to conquest, not to repose.

Nor was the religious belief of the Colonists less marked than their legal rights : they sought to be free not only as Englishmen but as Christians, and their faith was dearer to them than their charters.

Those charters, indeed, were in their judgment but an emanation and most imperfect image of the great law of God—the Gospel. Their rights would not have perished, though their charters should have ceased to uphold them : by the single energy of souls, supported by heavenly grace, they would have renewed those rights at springs superior and inaccessible to human power, for the feelings they cherished were even loftier than the institutions they were so jealous to defend.

It stands recorded how the mind of man, urged

onwards by the increase of wealth, of population, and of all the resources of society, as well as by its own impetuous activity, attempted, in the eighteenth century, to effect the conquest of the world. Political science began its high career ; but higher still rose the spirit of a proud unsatisfied philosophy, eager to search and to govern all things. Without precipitation, without a shock, and rather by yielding to a natural inclination than by straining after the novelties of the age, British America took her part in this great change. The theories of philosophy were there united to the truths of religion, the conquests of reason to the dominion of faith, the rights of man to the rights of Christians.

Fair and salutary is the alliance of the law historical and the law rational—of tradition, and of theory. Such a union endows nations no less with energy than with prudence: for whenever man is guided, though not enslaved, by established and

time-honoured institutions, which restrain whilst they support him, he may advance and rise, secure alike from the headlong flights of his intellect, which might fling him on unknown perils, and from the sloth of inglorious repose. But fairer and more salutary is that other alliance which unites religious faith in the mind of man to the general advancement of his ideas, and the liberty of reason to the persistency of faith : then it is that nations may rely on institutions of the boldest invention ; for religious belief is of inestimable assistance to the good government of human concerns. To perform his task in the world well, man must look down upon it from some higher point ; and if his soul is but on the level of his occupation, he soon degenerates and becomes incompetent to fulfil that occupation as he ought.

Such was the happy state of man and of society, in the British colonies, when England, by an imperious aggression, undertook to dispose, without

their consent, of their fortunes and their fate. The aggression was not unprecedented, nor was it wholly arbitrary ; it rested on historical grounds, and was not without some show of right.

The great art of society is to harmonise the several powers, assigning to each its proper sphere and proportion—a harmony indeed ever contested and disturbed, but one which may not the less be obtained, even by the conflict itself, to that extent at least which the common weal imperiously requires. A result of so difficult attainment is not within the reach of infant communities: not that any essential power is entirely unknown or abrogated amongst them ; all powers on the contrary exist and disclose themselves there, but they disclose themselves confusedly, with separate and conflicting interests, so as to bring about, not the contest which is succeeded by harmony, but the disorder which leads inevitably to war.

In the early history of the British colonies three different powers were in presence of each other, sanctioned by the same charters which secured their colonial liberties—the power of the Crown, that of the first planters and landowners, whether companies or individuals, and that of the mother-country. The Crown, by virtue of the principle of monarchy, deriving its traditions from the empire and the church. The planters, to whom the territory had been granted, by virtue of the feudal principle which ascribes to property a considerable share of political sovereignty. The mother-country, by virtue of the colonial principle, which has at all times and amongst all nations, by a natural association of facts and ideas, attributed to the home government a strong dominion over the population of its dependencies.

From the beginning, and as much in the annals as in the charters of these countries, extreme confusion prevailed between these powers, alternately

predominant or depressed, united or divided, sometimes protecting the colonists and their immunities from each other, sometimes combining to assail them. Amidst this confusion and these vicissitudes, they all had claims to urge and facts to allege in support of their actions or their pretensions.

In the middle of the seventeenth century, when the monarchy of England fell with Charles I., it might have been supposed that the colonies would have availed themselves of that event to emancipate themselves from the British sway. Some of them indeed, especially Massachusetts, inhabited by staunch puritans, displayed a willingness, if not to break off every tie with the mother-country, at least to govern themselves by their own laws. But the Long Parliament, in pursuance of the principle of colonial government as well as by virtue of the rights of the Crown which had devolved upon that body, maintained with moderation the ascendancy of Great Britain. Cromwell, when he had suc-

ceeded to the power of the Long Parliament, exercised that power with greater energy, and by a firm and able system of protection he prevented or repressed all hankering for independence in the colonies, whether they were inclined to the royalist or the republican cause.

Nor was this to him a difficult task. The colonies at that period were weak and divided. Virginia about the year 1640 reckoned only three or four thousand inhabitants, and barely thirty thousand in 1660 *. Those of Maryland did not exceed twelve thousand. In these two provinces the king's party preponderated and hailed the restoration with acclamations. In Massachusetts, on the contrary, the prevailing spirit was republican ; the fugitive regicides, Goff and Whalley, found favour and protection there ; and when at length the

* Marshall's Life of Washington, vol. i. Bancroft, History of the United States (5th edition, Boston, 1839), vol. i. p. 210, 232, 265.

local government was compelled to have Charles II. proclaimed, all noisy assemblages and rejoicings were prohibited, even to drinking the king's health.

As yet there existed in those provinces neither the moral unity nor the physical strength required to constitute a state.

After the revolution of 1688, when England entered into the permanent possession of a free government, her colonies were but slightly affected by the benefits of the change. The charters, which Charles II. or James II. had mutilated or abrogated, were imperfectly restored. The same confusion prevailed, the same discussions broke out between the several powers. The greater number of the governors, sent out from Europe and invested with the brief authority of the prerogative and pretensions of the crown, were more given to exhibit them haughtily than to use them forcibly, and their administration was for the

most part incoherent, intrusive, inefficacious, often covetous, and more earnest in its own quarrels than in behalf of the interests of the country.

But the colonies were no longer subjects of the crown alone; they were thenceforward the subjects of the crown and of the mother-country united in one. Their real sovereign was no longer the king, but the king and people of Great Britain represented by and identified in Parliament: whilst Parliament took almost the same view of the colonies, and held the same language to them, which had been affected towards Parliament itself in former ages by the monarchs it had since subdued.

An aristocratic senate is the most intractable of masters: all its members possess supreme power, none are responsible for the use of it.

Meanwhile the colonies grew rapidly in popula-

tion, in wealth, in internal strength and external importance. In lieu of a few obscure plantations, engrossed by their own wants and barely able to provide for their own subsistence, a people was springing up, whose agriculture, whose commerce, whose undertakings and whose intercourse claimed some place in the world. The home government, ill-fitted to govern the provinces well, had neither leisure nor the perverse inclination absolutely to oppress them : they were checked and annoyed, but not coerced.

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The growth of mind and heart was not disproportioned to that of the fortunes of the country. By a wise dispensation of Providence, the general state of a country is connected by some mysterious link, some secret but certain harmony, with the inward character of the inhabitants, uniting them alike in their social improvement and in their political destiny, so that the husbandman on his farm, the merchant in his counting-house, even

the artisan in his work-shop, gains day by day a manlier confidence, proportioned to the growing size and strength of the community to which he belongs.

So early as the year 1692 the legislature of Massachusetts, employed in establishing a system of laws under their new charter, passed an act containing the general principles respecting the liberty of the subject, which are asserted in Magna Charta, and in which was this memorable advice : "No aid, tax, tollage, assessment, custom, loan, benevolence, or imposition whatsoever, shall be laid, assessed or imposed on any of their majesties' subjects or their estates on any pretence whatsoever, but by the act and consent of the governor, council and representatives of the people assembled in general court *." In 1704,

* Story's Commentaries on the Constitution of the United States, i. p. 62. Marshall's Life of Washington, i. 306. It is almost unnecessary to add that this act was disallowed by the crown.

the Legislative Assembly of New York reiterated the same declarations, and resolved, "That the imposing and levying of any moneys upon Her Majesty's subjects of this colony, under any pretence or colour whatsoever, without their consent in General Assembly, is a grievance and violation of the people's property." The British government repelled these declarations, either in silence, or by a policy which was always somewhat evasive and reserved. The colonists on their side frequently allowed these assertions of their principles to pass away, without following them out to all their consequences. But these principles spread throughout the colonial community hand in hand with the growing powers which were to be devoted, at some future day, to their service and to their success.

Hence, when that day came, when King George III. and his Parliament, in the pride of power and in order to prevent their supremacy from lying dormant, rather than for the mere purpose of

pecuniary returns, reasserted the right to tax the colonies without their consent, a numerous, powerful, and enthusiastic party, the party of the nation, sprang up for resistance on behalf of their rights and of their country's honour.

It was indeed a question of right and honour, not of mere pecuniary welfare or interest. The taxes were light, and inflicted no privations on the colonists. But they were to be extorted from men to whom a galled spirit was the keenest of all sufferings, and who knew no peace but the peace of satisfied honour.

“What is it we are contending against? Is it against paying the duty of threepence per pound on tea because burthensome? No, it is the right only that we have all along disputed*.”

Such was the language of Washington himself,

* Washington's Writings, vol. ii. 392.

and the public feeling of the Americans, at the outbreak of the quarrel : a feeling as truly politic as it was moral, and one which indicates an equal share of judgment and of virtue.

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Nothing is more exemplary than the vast number of public meetings which were held at that period in the colonies : meetings, local and general, occasional or permanent, assemblies of citizens or of representatives, conventions, committees, Congress. In these meetings men of very different intentions were assembled ; some full of respect and attachment to the mother-country ; others ardently engrossed by their own American country, which was growing up under their eyes, the work of their own hands ; the former afflicted and alarmed, the latter eager and confident ; but all mastered and united by a common sense of dignity, by a common determination to resist ; giving utterance to the variety of their principles and notions, unattended by any serious or lasting

dissension amongst them; respecting each other on the contrary in their mutual freedom, and deliberating for the common weal in that spirit of conscientious deference, moderation, and justice, which ensures success and lessens the cost at which it is earned.

In June 1775, the first Congress assembled at Philadelphia was about to publish a solemn declaration of the causes of taking up arms. Two delegates, the one from Virginia, the other from Pennsylvania, Jefferson and Dickinson, were added to the committee which had been appointed to prepare the declaration: "I prepared," says Jefferson, "a draught of the declaration committed to us. It was too strong for Mr. Dickinson. He still retained the hope of reconciliation with the mother-country, and was unwilling it should be lessened by offensive statements. He was so honest a man and so able a one, that he was greatly indulged even by those who could not feel his scruples.

We therefore requested him to take the paper, and put it into a form he could approve. He did so, preparing an entire new statement, and preserving of the former only the last four paragraphs and half of the preceding one. We approved and reported it to Congress, who accepted it. Congress gave a signal proof of their indulgence to Mr. Dickinson, and of their great desire not to go too fast for any respectable part of our body, in permitting him to draw our second petition to the king according to his own ideas, and passing it with scarcely any amendment. The disgust against its humility was general; and Mr. Dickinson's delight at its passage was the only circumstance that reconciled them to it. The vote being passed, although further observation on it was out of order, he could not refrain from rising and expressing his satisfaction, and concluded by saying, 'There is but one word, Mr. President, in the paper which I disapprove, and that is the word *Congress* : ' on which Ben Harrison rose and said, 'There is but one word

in the paper, Mr. President, of which I approve, and that is the word *Congress*.' " *

A harmony so remarkable in the midst of so great a freedom was no ephemeral instance of their wisdom, no fortunate accident of the first outbreak of enthusiasm. For nearly ten years, during which the great struggle lasted, the most different members of the national party, young and old, eager and moderate, persevered in this united course, some by their wisdom, others by their firmness, preventing any serious rupture.

And when, forty-six years later, after having taken a part in the explosion and violent conflict of the parties which were engendered by American freedom, himself the head of the successful party, Jefferson set down the recollections of his early life†, it was assuredly not without mingled emotions

* Jefferson's Memoirs (London edition, 1829), vol. i. p. 9.

† Jefferson wrote his Memoirs in 1821.

of pleasure and regret that he recalled these fine instances of moderation and equity.

To break off the established order of government and to undertake the establishment of a new state, in a word, to begin an insurrection is an act of most solemn import for such men as these were, or for any man of sense and virtue. The most far-sighted can never measure its whole extent; the most resolute would quail if they knew the entire danger. Independence was not the premeditated design of the colonies, nor even the object of their wishes. A few penetrating or eager minds discerned or desired it as the utmost term of legal resistance. The American people by no means aspired to it, nor urged their leaders to assert it.

Gordon relates the following anecdote of a conversation said to have taken place in the year 1759, between Mr. Pratt, afterwards Lord Camden, and Dr. Franklin, but he cites no authority. "For all what you Americans say of loyalty," observed

Mr. Pratt, "I know you will one day throw off your dependence upon this country, and notwithstanding your boasted affection to it, will set up for independence." Franklin answered, "No such idea is entertained in the minds of the Americans ; and no such idea will enter their heads, unless you grossly abuse them." "Very true," replied Mr. Pratt, "that is one of the main causes I see will happen, and will produce the event *."

Lord Camden was right. British America was scandalously abused ; nevertheless in 1774, nay even in 1775, scarcely one year before the Declaration of Independence, when that declaration was becoming inevitable, Washington and Jefferson still held the following language :—

"You are taught to believe," wrote Washington to his friend Captain Mackenzie, who was then

* Washington's Writings, ii. p. 496. See Appendix, A.

serving in the regular army (October 9th 1774),
“that the people of Massachusetts are rebellious,
setting up for independency and what not—give
me leave, my good friend, to tell you that you are
abused, grossly abused. This I advance with a
degree of confidence and boldness which may
claim your belief, having better opportunities of
knowing the real sentiments of the people you are
among, from the leaders of them, in opposition to
the present measures of the administration, than
you have from those whose business it is, not to
disclose truths, but to misrepresent facts, in order
to justify as much as possible to the world, their
own conduct. Give me leave to add, and I think
I can announce it as a fact, that it is not the wish
or interest of that government or any other upon
this continent separately or collectively to set up
for independence; but this you may at the same
time rely on, that none of them will ever submit to
the loss of those valuable rights and privileges,
which are essential to the happiness of every free

state, and without which life, liberty, and property, are rendered totally insecure *.

Jefferson wrote to Randolph on the 29th November 1775, even after Lord Dunmore had commenced hostilities in Virginia :—

“ Believe me, dear sir, there is not in the British empire a man who more cordially loves a union with Great Britain than I do. But by the God that made me, I will cease to exist before I yield to a connexion on such terms as the British Parliament propose, and in this I think I speak the sentiments of America. We want neither inducement nor power to declare and assert a separation. It is will alone which is wanting, and that is growing apace under the fostering hand of our king †.”

* Washington's Writings, vol. ii. p. 400.

† Jefferson's Memoirs and Correspondence, i. p. 153.


George III. indeed, his honour compromised and his passions excited, supported and even stimulated his ministers and the Parliament in the struggle. In vain were fresh petitions laid at the foot of the throne, still loyal and respectful without being hypocritical; in vain was his name still retained in the prescribed services of the church, and the blessing of Heaven invoked upon his head. He took no reckoning of the prayers which were addressed to himself, or of those which rose for him to Heaven: and the war was carried on by his orders, carried on ill, without a powerful or well-combined effort, but with that hard and haughty obstinacy which obliterates affection as well as hope.

The day was evidently come, when sovereignty forfeits its right to allegiance, and when the right of self-defence by force devolves upon a people, who find no security in the existing government and have no resource from its oppression—that

day of dread and doubt, which no human wisdom can foresee, no human constitution regulate, but which nevertheless will sometimes rise, marked by the hand of providential power. If the great trial which is then commenced were absolutely prohibited—if, from the hidden point on which it rests, this great social right did not hang over the heads even of those powers by which its existence is most denied, mankind would long since have fallen beneath the yoke, deprived of all dignity and all happiness.

Another condition, no less essential, was not wanting to justify the insurrection of the British colonies—they had in their favour a reasonable chance of success.

The policy of England at that time was governed by no vigorous hand. The cabinet of Lord North was deficient in talents and in spirit. Lord Chatham, the only great man in the country, was on the side of the opposition.



The ages of gross tyranny were past. The proscriptions and barbarities of judicial and military authority, those terrific measures, those atrocious sufferings which, at a former period and in the very heart of Europe, were endured by Holland in no less just a cause, would not have been tolerated in the eighteenth century by the spectators of the American contest ; nor did they so much as occur to the minds of the most impassioned actors in those events. On the contrary, a powerful party and the eloquence of the loftiest oratory constantly supported the colonies and their rights even on the benches of the British Parliament—an admirable instance of that glorious quality of representative government, which leaves no cause without a defender, and introduces into the arena of politics those protective safeguards which have been provided for the sanctuary of justice.

Europe, moreover, could not be an unmoved witness of so great a controversy. Two great

powers, France and Spain, had to avenge upon England the recent injuries and severe losses they had sustained in America. Two powers of more modern growth, Russia and Prussia, paraded a somewhat ostentatious but an enlightened sympathy for the maxims of a liberal policy, and they showed their readiness to seize this opportunity to cry down or to injure England, in the name of liberty itself. A republic like Holland, once glorious and formidable, still rich and respected, could not fail to lend her capital and her credit to America in opposition to her ancient rival. Lastly, all those amongst the minor powers whose situation rendered the maritime despotism of England injurious and hateful to them, as Naples, Tuscany, and Genoa, naturally entertained feelings of goodwill towards the new State—feelings which might indeed be timid and followed by no prompt result, but which were not the less useful and encouraging.

By this singular chance of fortune everything



agreed, everything concurred to favour the insurgent colonies. Their cause was just, their strength already considerable, their intentions moral and prudent. Upon their own soil, their manners and their laws, the circumstances in which they were placed, and the principles they adopted, contributed alike to support and encourage them in their design. Great alliances awaited them in Europe. Even in the councils of the hostile mother-country they had powerful adherents. At no time in the annals of human society had a new and contested right obtained so much favour in the world, or engaged in a conflict with such chances of success.

Yet how various were the obstacles which that enterprize encountered ! what efforts and what evils it cost the generation upon which the achievement devolved ! how often did it appear, how often was it in reality upon the verge of utter discomfiture !

In the country itself, amongst a people which was apparently, and indeed had been for some time so truly unanimous, the declaration of independence once made, was soon assailed by numerous and active adversaries. In 1774, no sooner had the first musket-shot been fired at Lexington in the midst of general enthusiasm, than a detachment of troops from Connecticut was already required to support the republican party in New York, against the tories or loyalists, for such was the name which the partisans of the mother-country openly avowed*. In 1775, New York went so far as to send considerable reinforcements to the British army commanded by General Gage†. In 1776, when General Howe landed on the shores of that province, many of the inhabitants made public demonstrations of their joy, renewed their oath of allegiance to the crown, and took up arms in his favour‡. The same state of things prevailed in

* Marshall's Life of Washington, vol. ii. p. 151.

† Ibid. p. 198.

‡ Ibid. p. 209, 348.

New Jersey; and the loyalist bands raised in these two provinces were not less numerous than the republican troops*. Amidst this population, Washington himself was not safe; a scheme was laid for delivering him up to the English, and some of the men about his person were undoubtedly compromised in the plot †. Maryland and Georgia were divided. In the Carolinas, in 1776 and in 1779, two loyalist regiments, the one of fifteen hundred, the other of seven hundred men, were formed in a few days.‡ Against these intestine hostilities Congress and the local governments proceeded at first with extreme moderation, encouraging the friends of independence without taking notice of the adversaries of the cause, asking nothing from those who would have refused all assistance, but especially endeavouring by writings,

* Marshall's *Life of Washington*, vol. ii. 445. Sparks's *Life of Washington*, i. 261. Marshall's *Life of Washington*, iii. p. 55.

† Marshall's *Life of Washington*, ii. p. 326.

‡ Marshall's *Life of Washington*, vol. ii. p. 309; vol. iii. p. 50; vol. iv. p. 111.

by correspondence, by meetings, and by emissaries despatched to the more wavering parts of the country, to rally public opinion, to remove the scruples of some, to demonstrate the justice of their cause, and the necessity of their measures.

The source and the chief strength of the loyalist party consisted in their sincere and honourable feelings of fidelity, affection, and gratitude, in their respect for tradition, and in their love of order. For some time this party was merely watched and restrained; in some parts of the country even negotiations were entered into to obtain its neutrality. But the course of events, the imminence of the danger, the urgent necessities of the time, and the vehemence of passion, soon introduced a more rigorous policy. Arrests and banishments became frequent. The prisons were filled: confiscation began. Committees of public safety dealt with the liberty of their fellow-citizens on mere public report. The excesses of the mob not

unfrequently outstripped the arbitrary severity of those in authority. A printer in New York was devoted to the loyalists; a troop of horsemen, who came from Connecticut for that purpose, broke his presses and dispersed his type*. A spirit of hatred and revenge was kindled. In Georgia and South Carolina, as well as on the western frontier of Connecticut and Pennsylvania, the conflict of the two parties became fierce†; and in spite of the righteousness of its cause, in spite of the wisdom and virtues of its leaders, the young republic felt the miseries of civil war.

The national party teemed every day with miseries and dangers of a still more grievous character. The motives of the insurrection were pure—so pure that they could not long satisfy the imperfections of human nature, at least among the mass of the people. The first rising was general, for it was made in the name of rights to be main-

* Marshall's Life of Washington, vol. ii. p. 209. † Ibid., p. 72, 78.

tained, of honour to be vindicated. But whatever be the favouring influence of Providence, the work is long, success is slow in great undertakings, and the common run of men soon fall back exhausted by lassitude or by impatience. It was not for the purpose of escaping from the fangs of some atrocious tyranny that the insurrection was begun by the colonists ; they had not, like the pilgrim-fathers when they fled the English shores, to recover the first blessings of civil freedom, security for their persons or liberty for their creed. Nor were they incited by any imperious personal motive ; they had no community to despoil, no old and deep-seated passion to gratify. The conflict went on without creating in thousands of unknown families, those powerful interests, those rude but formidable ties, which have so often given to revolutions their chief strength and their keenest edge, amidst the antiquated and violent communities of Europe. Every succeeding day, almost every successive step to success, imposed, on the

contrary, the necessity of fresh efforts and fresh exertions. "I think," said Washington in July 1774, whilst he pointed out the hopelessness of reiterated addresses to the throne, "I think, at least I hope, that there is public virtue enough left amongst us to deny ourselves everything but the bare necessities of life to accomplish this end. This we have a right to do, and no power on earth can compel us to do otherwise till it has first reduced us to the most abject state of slavery*."

So sublime an aspiration deserved that recompense which it ultimately received—the triumph

* Washington's Writings, vol. ii. p. 395. Yet even under circumstances which appeared to Washington to demand the greatest sacrifices, his political morality was as perfect as his political resolution. The same letter (to Bryan Fairfax) goes on to say : "The stopping of our exports would no doubt be a shorter method than the other to effect this purpose ; but if we owe money to Great Britain, nothing but the last necessity can justify the non-payment of it ; and therefore I have great doubts upon this head, and wish to see the other method first tried, which is legal and will facilitate these payments."

of the cause; but it could hardly raise to an equal elevation the whole of the population whose free co-operation was the condition and almost the only means of success. Discouragement, lukewarmness in action, and the desire of evading the duties and toils of the service, soon became the essential evil and urgent danger against which the leaders had constantly to struggle. By those leaders, and amongst the foremost ranks of the party, its enthusiastic spirit of self-sacrifice was kept alive. Elsewhere, under similar circumstances, the impulse of perseverance and abnegation has proceeded from the people. In America, the independent and enlightened classes of society had to sustain and to invigorate the people in the great struggle in which their country was engaged. In the civil administration, the magistrates, the wealthy planters and the great merchants—in the army, the officers constantly showed themselves the firmest and most ardent adherents of the cause. They gave their example no less than their advice, and the

populace, instead of urging them on, hardly followed in their track. "I earnestly recommend to you to be circumspect in your choice of officers. Take none but gentlemen." Such were the instructions of Washington to Colonel Baylor* in the third year of the war: so strongly had he felt that the upper classes were most devoted to the cause of independence, and ready to risk and to endure everything for its success.

They alone, moreover, had the means, at least for their own persons, to meet the expenses of the war, for the State made no provision for them. No army, probably, ever subsisted under greater hardships than the American army. Almost always inferior in number; subject to periodical, and so to speak, legal desertion; obliged to march, to encamp, or to fight in an immense country, scarcely inhabited, for the most part uncultivated, without magazines of provisions, frequently without

* Washington's Writings, vol. iv., p. 269.



money to buy or power to exact them ; compelled to carry on war with as much attention to the persons and property of the inhabitants as is exacted from troops in garrison, during peace ; the amount of what was required of an army thus placed was only to be equalled by the sum of its unheard-of sufferings.


On the 23rd December, 1777, Washington addressed the following representation to the President of Congress.

“ I am now convinced beyond a doubt, that, unless some great and powerful change suddenly takes place in the commissary’s department, this army must inevitably be reduced to one or other of these three things ; starve, dissolve, or disperse in order to obtain subsistence in the best manner they can. Rest assured, sir, this is not an exaggerated picture, and that I have abundant reason to support what I say.* * What then is to become

of the army this winter? And if we are so often without provisions now, what is to become of us in the spring, when our force will be collected, with the aid perhaps of militia, to take advantage of an early campaign, before the enemy can be reinforced? These are considerations of great magnitude, meriting the closest attention; and they will, when my own reputation is so intimately connected with the event, and to be affected by it, justify my saying, that the present commissaries are by no means equal to the execution of the office, or that the disaffection of the people exceeds all belief. The misfortune, however, does in my opinion proceed from both causes; and I can declare with truth, that no man ever had his measures more impeded than I have, by every department of the army.* *

“ We have, by a field-return this day made, no less than two thousand eight hundred and ninety-eight men, now in camp, unfit for duty, because they are barefoot and otherwise naked.

“ We find gentlemen, without knowing whether the army was really going into winter-quarters or not, reprobating the measure as much as if they thought the soldiers were made of stocks and stones, and equally insensible of frost and snow ; and moreover, as if they conceived it easily practicable for an inferior army, under the disadvantages which I have described ours to be, which are by no means exaggerated, to confine a superior one, in all respects well-appointed and provided for a winter-campaign, within the city of Philadelphia, and to cover from depredation and waste the states of Pennsylvania and Jersey. I can assure those gentlemen, that it is a much easier and less distressing thing, to draw remonstrances in a comfortable room, by a good fireside, than to occupy a cold, bleak hill, and sleep under frost and snow, without clothes or blankets. However, although they seem to have little feeling for the naked and distressed soldiers, I feel superabundantly for them, and from my soul I pity those



miseries which it is neither in my power to relieve or prevent*.”

Congress, to which he resorted for relief, was as unable as himself to afford it. Without the physical power to enforce obedience to its orders, without the legal power of levying supplies, reduced to the bare statement of the public necessities and to solicit the contributions of the thirteen confederate States, with an exhausted people, a ruined trade, and a depreciated paper currency, that assembly, notwithstanding its firmness and its ability, could devise, and frequently could employ, no stronger measures than to address fresh exhortations to the several States, and to invest Washington with additional powers, charging him to obtain for himself from the local governments, supplies, money, and provisions,

* Washington's Writings, vol. v. 199.—The latter part of this passage alludes to the Memorial or Remonstrance of the legislature of Pennsylvania respecting his going into winter quarters.

in short whatever was required to carry on the war.

No sooner did Washington undertake this arduous task, than he was met by a fresh obstacle to be surmounted, a fresh danger to be allayed. No bond, no central authority, had hitherto united the colonies. Severally founded and separately administered, each of them had been accustomed to provide, on its own separate account, for its security, for its internal improvements, for its least as well as its most important concerns; and they had thus contracted habits of independence almost amounting to feelings of rivalry, which the jealousy of the mother-country had studiously kept alive. Ambition itself, and the desire of mutual conquest, lurked in their intercourse, as in that of foreign states: the more powerful sometimes endeavoured to encroach upon or to absorb the possessions of their neighbours, and in the most urgent of all their interests, the defence

of their frontier against the savage aborigines, they frequently followed the selfish policy of mutual desertion.

Great then was the task of suddenly uniting in one group, but without violent coercion, elements heretofore so distinct, and of making them act in harmony under the guidance of a single power. The characters of individuals were no less adverse to the change than the public institutions—the passions of the people no less than the laws of the country. The colonies mistrusted each other : they all mistrusted Congress, as the new and unstable rival of the local legislatures : still more did they mistrust the army, which they regarded as alike dangerous to the independence of the States and the freedom of the community. On this last point indeed, the newest theories of political science corroborated the instinct of the people. One of the favourite maxims of the last century was the danger of standing armies, and the necessity of constantly

resisting and reducing, in all free countries, their strength, their influence, and their peculiar characteristics. Perhaps this maxim was nowhere more cordially adopted than in the American colonies. In the national party, the men who were most eager and most determined to sustain the contest with unflinching vigour to the end, were also the most jealous friends of civil freedom, that is to say they looked upon the army, and all the spirit and discipline of military life, with a most hostile and suspicious eye. Hence the chief obstacles occurred precisely in the quarter where assistance was sought, and might have been hoped for.

In the army itself, which was the object of so much distrust, the strongest spirit of insubordination and democracy prevailed. Every order was disputed. Every detachment affected to act on its own account, and to consult its own peculiar convenience. The troops of the different States

would obey no generals but their own; the soldiers, no officers not directly chosen, or at least approved, by themselves. The morrow of a defeat which was to be repaired, or of a victory to be followed up, whole regiments disbanded themselves and retired, without even consenting to wait so long as a few days until their successors arrived.

The mind is struck by doubts of melancholy alarm, when it surveys the harsh trials to which so just a revolution was exposed,—the numerous and hairbreadth dangers to which a revolution, than which none was ever more prepared for success, was subjected. Unjust and rash are all such doubts. Man is blinded in his hopes by pride—in despondency he is blind from weakness. A revolution, however just and however fortunate, lays bare the mighty moral and physical evil which lurks in all human society. Yet the good principle perishes not in the trial, nor with the impure element to which that trial unites it; however imperfect and

however adulterated, its power, no less than its rights, abide : if it predominate in man, sooner or later it prevails in man's achievements, and instruments are never wanting to its success.

May the United States for ever bear in grateful and reverential memory the names of the leaders of the generation which conquered their independence and founded their government ! Franklin, Adams, Hamilton, Jefferson, Madison, Jay, Henry, Mason, Greene, Knox, Morris, Pinkney, Clinton, Trumbull, Rutledge. All I cannot name, for at the time when the quarrel began, in every colony, and almost in every county of every colony, there were some already honoured by their fellow-citizens, already tried in the defence of public liberty, influential by their fortune, their talents, or their character ; faithful to the pristine virtues, yet adhering to the enlightened principles of modern society ; not insensible to the display of modern civilisation, yet fond of simplicity of manners ; high

in heart, yet in mind modest ; at once ambitious and prudent in their desires for their country : men of that singular quality, that they relied much on human nature, without presuming on themselves, and wished for their country far more than their country could confer upon them after her triumph. To them, with the protection of God and the assistance of the people, that triumph was due. Their leader was Washington.

He was young, still extremely young, when great expectations were already formed of him. When employed as an officer in the militia in some expeditions on the western frontier of Virginia against the French and the Indians, he attracted the attention of his superior officers and of his comrades, of the English governors and the American population. The former wrote to London to recommend him to the notice of the King* ; the latter, as-

* The following extract from a letter written by Governor Dinwiddie to Sir T. Robinson, Secretary of State, is a proof of

sembled in their churches to invoke the blessing of Heaven upon their arms, listened with pride to the eloquence with which Samuel Davies, a celebrated preacher, enlarged upon the courage of the Virginians. "As a remarkable instance of this," said he, "I may point out to the public that heroic youth, Colonel Washington, whom I cannot but hope Providence has hitherto preserved in so signal a manner for some important service to his country*."

the estimation in which Colonel Washington was at this time held, and that he was recommended to the favourable notice of the King :—

"I have granted commissions to raise sixteen companies, augmenting our forces to one thousand men, and have incorporated them into a regiment, the command thereof being given to Colonel George Washington, who was one of General Braddock's aides-de-camp, and I think a man of great merit and resolution. I am convinced if General Braddock had survived, he would have recommended Mr. Washington to the royal favour, which I beg your interest in recommending."—Washington's Writings, vol. ii. p. 97.

* The occasion alluded to was Braddock's defeat by the French and Indians at the battle of the Monongahela. "The Virginian troops," says Washington, writing to his mother, "showed a

There is another tradition also worthy of notice, which rests on the authority of one of the most intimate friends of Washington from his boyhood to his death, who was with him at the battle of the Monongahela. Fifteen years after that event, they travelled together on an expedition to the western country, with a party of woodmen, for the purpose of exploring wild lands. While near the junction of the Great Kenawha and Ohio Rivers, a company of Indians came to them with an interpreter, at the head of whom was an aged and venerable chief. This personage made known to them, by the interpreter, that hearing Colonel Washington was in that region, he had come a long way to visit him, adding, that during

great deal of bravery, and were nearly all killed ; for I believe out of three companies that were there, scarcely thirty men are left alive. By the all-powerful dispensations of Providence I have been protected beyond all human probability or expectation, for I had four bullets through my coat, and two horses shot under me, yet escaped unhurt, although death was levelling my companions on every side."—Washington's Writings, vol. ii. p. 89, and p. 474.

the battle of the Monongahela, he had singled him out as a conspicuous object, fired his rifle at him many times, and directed his young warriors to do the same, but to his utter astonishment none of their balls took effect. He was then persuaded, that the youthful hero was under the special guardianship of the Great Spirit, and ceased to fire at him any longer. He was now come to pay homage to the man who was the particular favourite of Heaven, and who could never die in battle*. These incidents were afterwards dramatised in a piece called "*The Indian Prophecy*," and the story obtained currency in America, for men love to imagine that they have caught a glimpse of the secret designs of Providence.

Never, perhaps, was this unaccountable presentiment, this premature reliance in the destiny, I dare not say the predestination, of a man, more natural than when thus applied to Washington;

* Washington's Writings, vol. ii. 476.

for no man ever appeared to be, or ever was, from his youth upwards, and from his first actions, more set apart for his future life, and for the cause whose success he was afterwards to ensure.

He was a planter, a man of family and of taste, devoted to those interests, habits, and pursuits of agricultural life, which constituted the principal vigour of American society. Fifty years later, Jefferson said, in order to justify his reliance on the entirely democratic organisation of American society : “ Our confident expectations cannot deceive us as long as we remain virtuous, and virtuous we shall remain as long as agriculture is our chief concern.” From the age of twenty Washington considered agriculture as his chief business, and thus his life was spent in the closest sympathy with the prevailing propensities, and the good sturdy habits of his country. Journeys, field-sports, the exploring of remote hunting-grounds, and intercourse, whether friendly or hostile, with the Indians of

the border, were the pleasures of his youth. He was of that active and enterprising disposition which takes delight in the perils and adventures to which man is exposed in the vast wilds of an unexplored country: he was endowed with that strength of limb, that perseverance and presence of mind which makes a man triumph over such obstacles. Indeed the confidence he felt in these faculties, at the outset of life, was somewhat presumptuous: "For my own part," said he to Governor Dinwiddie, "I can answer that I have a constitution hardy enough to encounter and undergo the most severe trials, and I flatter myself resolution to face what any man dares, as shall be proved when it comes to the test *."

To such a character, war was of course even more congenial than field-sports or travel. At the first opportunity which occurred, he marched to

* Washington's Writings, vol. ii. p. 29.

the field with a degree of ardour, which, in the earlier years of life, is not always attended with equal aptitude and taste for the service. In 1754, George II. was listening to a despatch which the governor of Virginia had forwarded to London, and in which young Major Washington concluded a narrative of his first skirmish by these words : “ I heard the bullets whistle, and believe me there is something charming in the sound.” On hearing this the king said, “ He would not say so, if he had been used to hear many.” Washington was of the king’s opinion ; for when the major of the Virginian militia was become commander-in-chief of the army of the United States, he replied to some one who asked him whether he had ever made use of that expression, “ If I said so it was when I was young*.”

But his youthful ardour was, at the same time,

* The story is preserved in Horace Walpole’s *Memoirs of George II.*, and appears to be of doubtful authority ; for in the despatch in question (which is preserved) the expression does not occur.—*Washington’s Writings*, vol. ii. p. 39.

serious and serene, and it bore the authority of maturer years. From the first, what he loved in war, far above the heat of battle, was the great effort of intellect and will, armed with power, to achieve some grand design—the mighty mixture of human agency and of fortune, which seizes and transports the highest as well as the humblest minds. Born in the highest rank of colonial society, brought up at a public school, amongst his fellow-countrymen, he naturally took his place at their head, for he was at once their equal and their superior, formed to the same habits, skilled in the same exercises, a stranger like them to all elegant accomplishments and all pretensions to learning, claiming nothing for himself and displaying exclusively for the public service that ascendancy which a penetrating and sensible mind, a calm and energetic character, will always secure when they are joined to disinterestedness.

In 1754 he had but just entered into society and

adopted the profession of arms; at two-and-twenty he held the commission of an officer commanding the militia and corresponding with the representative of the King of England—equally unembarrassed by either position. Loving his comrades, respectful to the king and governor, neither love nor respect could impair the independence of his judgment and of his conduct. He knew, he saw with admirable readiness for action and for command, by what means and upon what conditions the service of the king and of the country would be carried on with success. These conditions, these means, he exacted and he imposed—on the soldiers if they related to the discipline, accuracy, and activity of the service—on the governor with respect to the payment of the troops, the commissariat, or the appointment of officers. In all positions, whether his language rise to the superior to whom he renders an account, or descend to the subordinates who are under his orders, it is ever equally clear, practical, and decided, equally stamped with

that authority which truth and necessity confer upon the man who speaks in their name. Thenceforward Washington was that eminent American, that faithful and foremost representative of his country, who was best able to understand and to serve her, whether by treaty or by the sword, whether by defending or by governing her.

Nor have these qualities been shown by the event alone: they were anticipated by his contemporaries. "Your good health and fortune are the toast at every table," wrote Colonel Fairfax, his first patron, to him in 1756. In 1759, when he was elected for the first time to the House of Burgesses of Virginia, on taking his seat, Mr. Robinson the Speaker expressed to him with much warmth of colouring and strength of expression the gratitude of that assembly for the services he had rendered his country. Washington rose to thank him for the compliment; but such was his confusion that he was unable to utter a word; he

blushed, stammered and trembled for a second ; the Speaker relieved him by a stroke of address—
“ Sit down, Mr. Washington,” said he, “ your modesty equals your valour ; and that surpasses the power of any language that I possess*.”

Again, in 1774, on the eve of the great contest, Patrick Henry, one of the most ardent republicans in America, on returning home from that first Congress which had been formed to prepare for the event, and upon being asked who was the first man in Congress, replied, “ If you speak of eloquence, Mr. Rutledge of South Carolina is by far the greatest orator ; but if you speak of solid information and sound judgment, Colonel Washington is unquestionably the greatest man on that floor†.”

Yet, even without reference to eloquence, Washington had none of those brilliant and extra-

* Life of Patrick Henry, 3rd edition, p. 43.

† Ibid., p. 113.

ordinary qualities, which strike at once upon the human imagination. He was not one of those ardent spirits, eager to explode, driven onwards by the energy of their thoughts or of their passions, and scattering about them the exuberance of their own natures, before either opportunity or necessity has called forth the exercise of their powers. Unacquainted with aught of inward agitation, untormented by the promptings of splendid ambition, Washington anticipated none of the occurrences of his life, and aspired not to win the admiration of mankind. His firm intellect and his high heart were profoundly modest and calm. Capable of rising to the level of the highest greatness, he could without a pang have remained ignorant of his own powers, and he would have found in the cultivation of his estate * enough to satisfy those vast faculties which were equal to the command of armies and the foundation of a government. But when the opportunity occurred, when the need was, without an effort on

* See Appendix, B.

his part and without surprise on that of others, or, rather, as has just been shown, in conformity with their expectations, the wise planter shone forth a great man. He had to a very high degree the two qualities which, in active life, fit men for great achievements: he trusted firmly in his own thoughts, and dared resolutely to act upon them, without fear of responsibility.

Weakness of conduct is but the consequence of weakness of conviction; for the strongest of all the springs of human action is human belief. No sooner was the contest begun, than Washington was convinced that the cause of his country was that of justice, and that to so just a cause, in a country already so great, success could not be wanting. To win the independence of the United States by arms, nine years were required; to establish the government by his policy, ten more. Obstacles, reverses, animosities, treachery, mistakes, public apathy and private annoyances beset, as they must ever do,

the steps of Washington during this long career. Not for one moment were his faith and hope shaken. At the worst, when he had to struggle against his own melancholy, he said: "I cannot but hope and believe that the good sense of the people will ultimately get the better of their prejudices. Everything, my dear Trumbull, will come right at last, as we have often prophesied. My only fear is that we shall lose a little reputation first."—Again to Lafayette in 1788:—"I do not believe that Providence has done so much for nothing. It has always been my creed that we should not be left as a monument to prove 'that mankind, under the most favourable circumstances for civil liberty and happiness, are unequal to the task of governing themselves, and therefore made for a master.'" And in another letter, "No country upon earth ever had it more in its power than United America to establish good order and government, and to render the nation happy at home and respectable abroad. Wondrously strange, then, and much

to be regretted indeed would it be, were we to neglect the means and depart from the road which Providence has pointed out to us so plainly. I cannot believe that it will ever come to pass. The great Governor of the Universe has led us too long and too far on the road to happiness and glory to forsake us in the midst of it. By folly and improper conduct, proceeding from a variety of causes, we may now and then get bewildered ; but I hope and trust, that there is good sense and virtue enough left to recover the right path before we shall be entirely lost*.”

And at a later period, when his Presidency was assailed by embarrassments and dangers more formidable than war, proceeding from France—from that very country which during the war had so well supported him ; when the convulsions of Europe were superadded to the concerns of America, and startled his mind, he still trusted, he still believed :

* Washington's Writings, vol. ix. pp. 5, 383, 392.

“ If it can be a happiness to live in an age productive of great and interesting events, we of the present age are very highly favoured. The rapidity of national revolutions appears no less striking than their magnitude. In what they will terminate, is known only to the great Ruler of events ; and confiding in his wisdom and goodness, we may safely trust the issue to him, without perplexing ourselves to seek for that which is beyond human ken ; only taking care to perform the parts assigned to us, in a way that reason and our own consciences approve*.”

The same energy of conviction, the same reliance upon his own judgment, which he applied to his general appreciation of all subjects, attended him in practical business. So excellent was the freedom of his mind, rather from its exceeding fairness than from its fecundity or versatility, that he took his opinions from no one, and never

* Washington's Writings, vol. x. p. 331.

adopted them under the sanction of prejudice ; but on all occasions formed them for himself, upon a mere survey or an attentive study of facts, unencumbered by any intermediate influence, but ever in direct personal communication with the reality.

Hence, when he had observed, reflected, and formed his opinion, nothing could disturb him in it : he never allowed himself to be placed or kept by the opinions of other men, or by the desire of applause, or by the dread of contradiction, in a state of doubt or continual vacillation. He had faith in God and in himself : “ If any power on earth could, or the Great Power above would, erect the standard of infallibility in political opinion, there is no being that inhabits this terrestrial globe, that would resort to it with more eagerness than myself, so long as I remain a servant of the public. But as I have found no better guide hitherto than upright intentions and

close investigation, I shall adhere to those maxims while I keep the watch *." For he united, to this firm and independent mind, an intrepid heart, ever ready to act upon his convictions, and to bear the responsibility of his actions. "What I admire in Christopher Columbus," said Turgot, "is not that he discovered the New World, but that he started in search of it, trusting to his own opinion." On all occasions whether small or great, whether their consequences were proximate or remote, Washington, once convinced, never hesitated to advance upon the faith of his own conviction. So clear and calm was his determination, that it seemed natural to him, both to decide on the course to be pursued, and to hold himself answerable for it; a sure sign of talents born for government, and faculty of the highest order when it is united to conscientious purity of motives.

* Washington's Writings, vol. xi. p. 71.

In the history of great minds, if any have shone with a more dazzling lustre, none certainly were ever subjected to a more complete trial—by war and by government—by resistance, in the name of freedom, and in the name of authority, to the King and to the People—by the commencement of a revolution and by its close.

From the first, the task of Washington lay before him in all its extent and its complexity. To carry on the war, he not only had to create an army; for however difficult such an operation must at all times be, there the creative power was itself wanting; the United States were as destitute of a government as of an army. The Congress, a mere phantom, a delusive point of union, had no right and no power to act, and neither dared nor did anything. Washington, from his camp, was obliged, not only unceasingly to solicit support, but to suggest to Congress what was required to be done in order to accomplish its

work, and to prevent both Congress and the army from becoming a mere dead letter. His letters were read in the House, and formed the subject of their debates—but those debates were characterised by inexperience, timidity, and mistrust. Promises and pretences were all that could be obtained: matters were referred to the local governments; and the power of the army was an object of constant dread. Washington replied respectfully, obeyed orders, and then insisted to demonstration upon the fallacy of pretences, and the necessity of supporting by real power that titular authority with which they had invested him, and that army to which they looked for victory. Men of intellect, courage, and devotion to the cause, were not wanting in that Assembly, however unaccustomed to govern it had hitherto been. Some of them visited the camp, saw with their own eyes, conversed with Washington, and brought back with them, on their return, the authority of their own observations and of his

advice. The assembly became better informed, more resolute, more confiding in its own resources and in the general of its choice. The measures he required were passed ; the powers he needed were conferred upon him. He then entered into correspondence and negotiation with the local governments, with the local assemblies, with committees, with magistrates, with private citizens, pointing out facts to their observation, calling upon their good sense and patriotism, turning his own private friendships to the advantage of the public service, carefully avoiding all umbrage to the spirit of democracy or the sensitiveness of personal vanity, preserving his rank, speaking with authority, but without offence and with the persuasiveness of moderation : wonderfully skilled in ruling men by their sense of what was right and virtuous, whilst he observed the most prudent treatment of the frailties of human nature.

But when he had succeeded thus far, when first

the Congress, and afterwards the different States, had given him the materials of an army, his task was yet unaccomplished; the work of war was scarcely begun, the army itself not yet in existence. Here again he was met by complete inexperience, by the same absence of unity, the same passion for individual independence, the same conflict between patriotic intentions and anarchical propensities. Here again he had to rally the most discordant elements, to hold together elements which threatened immediate dissolution, to instruct, to persuade, to act by every means of precaution and of influence, to obtain, in short, without compromising his dignity or his power, the moral support and free co-operation of his officers, and even of his soldiers.

Then first could Washington act as a general, and turn his thoughts to the conduct of the war: say rather, that during the war itself, amidst its incidents, its chances, and its perils, he had con-

stantly to recommence, in the country as well as in the army, the laborious task of organising and directing the administration.

His merit as a military commander has been called in question. It is true that he never gave those signal proofs of it, which have, in Europe, established the reputation of the greatest warriors. His operations were conducted with a small army, on an immense extent of country, where great displays of strategies and great battles were necessarily unknown to him.

But his acknowledged superiority, declared by his own companions in arms, by nine years of warfare, and by final success, may be admitted as no unworthy proof, and may well serve to justify his fame. His personal bravery was brilliant, and even rash; and he more than once allowed it to master his usual self-command. More than once the American militia, seized with terror, took to

flight, and their officers laid down their lives to teach the men their duty.

In 1776, on an occasion of this kind, Washington insisted on remaining on the field of battle, using every means in his power to rally the troops by his example, and even by force. In writing from Harlem Heights the next day, General Greene said: "We made a miserable disorderly retreat from New York, owing to the disorderly conduct of the militia, who ran at the appearance of the enemy's advanced guard. Fellows's and Parsons's brigades ran away from about fifty men, and left his Excellency on the ground within about fifty yards of the enemy, so vexed at the infamous conduct of his troops that he sought death rather than life *."

On more than one occasion also, when the opportunity seemed to him to be favourable, he

* Washington's Writings, vol. iv. p. 94.

displayed no less intrepidity as a general than bravery as a man. Washington has been called the American Fabius, from an opinion that the art of avoiding general engagements, of deceiving the enemy, and of temporising, was his peculiar talent as well as taste. In 1776, before Boston, at the commencement of the war, this Fabius sought to bring it to a conclusion at one blow, by attacking the British army, which he thought it possible to destroy. "No man upon earth," said he to the President of Congress, "wishes more ardently to destroy the nest in Boston, than I do; no person would be willing to go greater lengths than I shall to accomplish it, if it be thought advisable." Three successive councils of war obliged him to give up the plan, but his conviction was not altered, and he spoke of this adverse decision with great regret. "About ten days ago the severe freezing weather (the letter is dated the 26th February, 1776) formed some pretty strong ice from Dorchester to Boston Neck, and from Roxbury to the

Common. This I thought, knowing the ice could not last, a favourable opportunity to make an assault upon the troops in town. I proposed it in council; but behold, though we had been waiting all the year for this favourable event, the enterprise was thought too dangerous. Perhaps it was; perhaps the irksomeness of my situation led me to undertake more than could be warranted by prudence. I did not think so, and I am sure yet, that the enterprise if it had been undertaken with resolution, must have succeeded; without it, any would fail*."

In 1776, in the State of New York, during the severest cold, in the midst of a retreat, with troops already half disbanded, and most of whom were on the point of leaving the army to return home,

* Washington's Writings, vol. iii., p. 297. See also p. 50 for the circular despatch in which a similar proposal had been made in the preceding autumn to the Major and Brigadier Generals of the army.

Washington suddenly resumed the offensive, successively attacked at Trenton and at Princetown the several detachments of the British army, and gained two battles in a week.

He knew, moreover, a loftier and more difficult art than that of making war—he knew how to control it. War was never to him anything but a means, constantly subordinate to his general and definitive object—success to the cause, independence to the country. When in 1798 the prospect of possible hostilities between France and the United States intruded upon his tranquillity at Mount Vernon, when he was already advanced in years and fond of his repose, he wrote to Mr. Adams, his successor in the government of the Commonwealth :

“ It is not difficult for me to perceive that if we enter into a serious contest with France, the character of the war would differ materially from

the last we were engaged in. In the latter, time, caution, and worrying the enemy until we could be better provided with arms and other means, and had better-disciplined troops to carry it on, was the plan for us. But if we should be engaged with the former, they ought to be attacked at every step, and if possible not suffered to make an establishment in the country, acquiring thereby strength from the disaffected and the slaves, whom I have no doubt they will arm, and for that purpose commence their operations south of the Potomac*.”

This system of active aggressive warfare which at the age of sixty-six he proposed to adopt, was one which, twenty-two years earlier, when he was in the prime of life, neither the advice of some generals, his friends—nor the calumnies of others, his rivals—nor the complaints of those States which were devastated by the enemy—nor the clamour of

* Washington's Writings, vol. xi. p. 309.

the people—nor the desire of glory—nor even the remonstrances of Congress, could induce him to pursue.

“ I know the integrity of my own heart, but to declare it, unless to a friend, may be an argument of vanity ; I know the unhappy predicament I stand in : I know that much is expected of me ; I know that without men, without arms, without ammunition, without anything fit for the accommodation of a soldier, little is to be done ; and, what is mortifying, I know that I cannot stand justified to the world without exposing my own weakness, and injuring the cause by declaring my wants, which I am determined not to do, further than unavoidable necessity brings every man acquainted with them. If under these disadvantages I am able to keep above water, in the esteem of mankind, I shall feel myself happy ; but if, from the unknown peculiarity of my circumstances, I suffer in the opinion of the world, I shall not think you take

the freedom of a friend, if you conceal the reflections which may be cast upon my conduct. My own situation is so irksome to me at times, that if it were not for the public good, more than my own tranquillity, long ere this I should have put everything upon the cast of a die *."

For nine years he persevered : except indeed that, when the duration of the struggle and the lassitude of the nation seemed to have engendered a state of despondency subsiding into apathy, he determined upon some signal achievement, some bold attempt to make the country feel the presence of the army, and raise the courage of the people. Thus it was that in 1777 he fought the battle of Germantown : and when, in the midst of reverses patiently endured, he was asked what he would do if the enemy still advanced, if Philadelphia for instance was taken, he is reported to have said,

* Washington's Writings, vol. iii. p. 285.

“ We will retreat beyond the Susquehanna river, and thence if necessary to the Allegany mountains *.”

To this patriotic patience, he joined another sort of patience of a still higher order of merit. He witnessed the success of his lieutenants without umbrage and without offence: nay more, whenever the public service rendered it advisable, he supplied them with ample means and opportunities. A disinterestedness so admirable and so rare even in the greatest characters, was no less wise than it was honourable, amidst the jealous sensitiveness of a democratic community; and it was perhaps attended in him—at least we may hope so—with a deep and calm consciousness of his ascendancy and of his fame.

When the horizon was dark, when frequent

* Sparks's Life of Washington, vol. i. p. 221.

reverses and protracted hardships seemed to compromise the General, and to call forth dissension, cabal, and hostile insinuations, the powerful and united voice of the army was soon heard to cover Washington with affectionate regard, and to place him at once beyond the reach of all complaint, above that of all hostility.

In the winter of 1777-78, whilst the army was encamped at Valley-Forge, and exposed to the severest trials, a few troubled and designing spirits concerted an intrigue of some importance against Washington, which reached even into Congress. He met it with the frank severity of his character, saying without reserve or misplaced conciliation what he thought of his adversaries, and leaving his own conduct to speak for itself. But so deep-seated was the public esteem of Washington—so warmly was he supported by his friends, Lord Sterling, Lafayette, Greene, Knox, Patrick Henry, and Henry Laurens—so intense was the

feeling of the army, that he triumphed almost without an effort in his own defence. The chief tool of the cabal, the Irishman Conway, resigned, and gave vent to the most violent language on the subject. General Cadwallader resented these expressions ; a duel ensued, after which Conway, who was severely wounded and thought himself at the point of death, wrote to Washington the following letter :

" Philadelphia, 23rd July, 1778.

" SIR,

" I find myself just able to hold the pen during a few minutes, and take this opportunity of expressing my sincere grief for having done, written, or said anything disagreeable to your Excellency. My career will soon be over ; therefore justice and truth prompt me to declare my last sentiments. You are in my eyes the great and good man. May you long enjoy the love,

reverence, and esteem of these States, whose liberties you have assisted by your virtues!

“I am, with the greatest respect, &c.,

“THOMAS CONWAY*.”

In 1779, the officers of the Jersey brigade, embarrassed by the arrear of their pay, encumbered with debts contracted in the service, anxious for their own future condition and that of their families, delivered a remonstrance to their colonel, addressed to the legislature of the State, declaring that unless their complaints on the subject of pay and support should obtain the immediate attention of that body, they were at the expiration of three days to be considered as having resigned. Washington blamed them severely for this step, and enjoined on them to renounce a line of conduct no less fatal to the dignity and safety of the

* Washington's Writings, vol. v. p. 517.

country than to their own reputations. They persisted however in their purpose. "At length," said they in reply, "we have lost all confidence in the legislature. Reason and experience forbid that we should have any. Few of us have private fortunes: many have families who are already suffering everything that can be received from an ungrateful country. Are we then to suffer all the inconveniences of a military life, while our wives and our children are perishing for want of common necessaries at home; and that without the most distant hope of reward, for our pay is now only nominal? We are sensible that your Excellency cannot wish or desire this from us. We are sorry that you should imagine we meant to disobey orders. It was, and still is, our determination to march with our regiment, and to do the duty of officers, until the legislature should have a reasonable time to appoint others, but no longer.

"We beg leave to assure your Exc

we have the highest sense of your ability and virtue; that executing your orders has ever given us pleasure; that we love the service and we love our country; but when that country gets so lost to virtue and justice as to forget to support its servants, it then becomes their duty to retire from its service*."

Thus respect for Washington was elicited even by the cabals which were plotted against him, and mingled even with acts of insubordination. In the state of distress and dislocation into which the American army was constantly falling, the personal influence of Washington, the affection entertained towards him, the desire of imitating his example, the dread of losing his esteem or even of vexing him, must be reckoned amongst the principal causes which kept many men, whether officers or soldiers, about him, fostered their zeal, and

* Marshall's Life of Washington, vol. iv. p. 100.

formed between them that bond of military union, that martial friendship, which is the chief strength and the noblest compensation of that trying profession.

It is the privilege of great men—often a corrupting privilege—to inspire feelings of affection and devotedness, which they do not themselves entertain. Washington was without this vice of greatness. He loved his companions, his officers, his army. It was not only from a sense of justice and of duty that he shared their privations and espoused their interests with indefatigable zeal. He regarded them with feelings of tender affection, mingled with compassion for the hardships he had seen them undergo, and with gratitude for the attachment they had manifested to him. Thus when in 1783, at the close of the war, the parting scene took place in the French Tavern at New York, and each officer, as they defiled silently for the

last time before their General, pressed his hand as he passed, Washington himself was affected and overcome, both in heart and in outward appearance, beyond what the strong serenity of his character would seem to admit of.

Yet he never showed towards the army either weakness or favour. He never allowed the army to occupy the highest place even in its own estimation; and lost no opportunity of inculcating upon it the truth, that subordination and self-sacrifice, not only to the country, but to the civil authorities of the country, are its natural condition and its bounden duty.

In three several instances he gave to the army the finest and most effectual of all lessons, that of his own example. In 1782, he "viewed with abhorrence and reprehended with severity" the very idea of assuming the supreme power and the

crown, which were proffered him by certain disaffected officers*.

In 1783, when the time to disband the forces was drawing near, being informed that a proposed address was then in circulation in the army, and that a general meeting was to be held, to consult as to the means of obtaining by force what Congress refused to grant notwithstanding the justice of the claim, he severely reprobated the whole proceeding by an order of the day, summoned another meeting himself, attended it, reminded the officers of their duty and of the common weal,

* Washington's Writings. Letter to Colonel Lewis Nicola, vol. viii. p. 300.—“ I am much at a loss,” said he, “ to conceive what part of my conduct could have given encouragement to an address, which to me seems big with the greatest mischiefs that can befall my country. If I am not deceived in knowledge of myself, you could not have found a person to whom your schemes are more disagreeable. Let me conjure you then, if you have any regard for your country, concern for yourself and posterity, or respect for me, to banish these thoughts from your mind, and never communicate, as from yourself or any one else, a sentiment of the like nature.”

and retired before deliberation began, for the purpose of leaving to themselves all the merit of that prompt and general return to their duty, which did not fail to reward his exertions*.

Lastly, in 1784 and 1787, when the retired officers attempted to form amongst themselves the Society of Cincinnati, as some bond of union after their dispersal, and for the mutual support of themselves and their families, no sooner did Washington perceive that the mistrust and displeasure of his jealous country were awakened by the mere terms—military association, military order, than, notwithstanding his own liking for the institution, he not only caused its statutes to be amended, but he publicly declined the presidency of the society, and ceased to take a part in its proceedings†.

* Washington's Writings, vol. viii. p. 392-400. Letter to the President of Congress.

† Washington's Writings. Letter to General Knox, vol. ix. p. 26. Letter to Arthur St. Clair, *ibid.* p. 127. *Ibid.* p. 495.

By a singular coincidence, at about the same time Gustavus III., king of Sweden, prohibited the Swedish officers who had served in the French army in the American war, from wearing the Order of Cincinnatus * ; on the ground that the institution had a republican tendency not suited to his government.

In writing to Jonathan Trumbull on the choice of delegates to the general meeting of the Society of Cincinnati, Washington observed, "Our measures should be deliberate and wise. If we cannot convince the people that their fears are ill-founded, we should, at least in a degree, yield to them†."

He would not yield, even to the people, when such compliance might be prejudicial to the common weal ; but he had too nice a discernment of the

* Washington's Writings, vol. ix. p. 56.

† Washington's Writings, Letter to Jonathan Trumbull, vol. ix. p. 35.

relative importance of things to act with the same inflexibility when private interests and feelings, however warrantable, were alone concerned.

When the object of the war was achieved, when he had taken leave of his comrades in arms, another sentiment may be discerned beside the grief of parting and the satisfaction of repose after victory, a feeling so latent as possibly to have been unknown even to himself: regret for his military life, for that noble profession to which the best years of his existence had been so honourably devoted. No pursuit was more attractive to Washington; whose staid genius, more firm than prolific, just and kind to all men but serious and somewhat cold, was better fitted for command than for contest, whilst it attached him to order, discipline, and subordination in action, and made him prefer a downright and simple trial of strength, in a good cause, to the subtle complexity and the passionate discussions of politics.

“The scene is at last closed,” he writes on the 28th December 1783, a few days after he had divested himself of his official character, “I feel myself eased of a load of public care. I hope to spend the remainder of my days in cultivating the affections of good men and in the practice of the domestic virtues*.” Again, a few weeks later: “I am just beginning to experience that ease and freedom from public cares, which, however desirable, takes some time to realize; for strange as it may seem, it is nevertheless true, that it was not till lately I could get the better of my usual custom of ruminating, as soon as I waked in the morning, on the business of the ensuing day; and of my surprise at finding, after revolving many things in my mind, that I was no longer a public man, nor had anything to do with public transactions†.” And to M. de Lafayette:—
“At length, my dear Marquis, I am become a pri-

* Washington's Writings, vol. ix. p. 1.

† Ibid., p. 21.

vate citizen on the banks of the Potomac; and under the shadow of my own vine and my own fig-tree, free from the bustle of a camp, and the busy scenes of public life, I am solacing myself with tranquil enjoyments. * * * I have not only retired from all public employments, but I am retiring within myself, and shall be able to view the solitary walk, and tread the paths of private life, with a heartfelt satisfaction. Envious of none, I am determined to be pleased with all; and this, my dear friend, being the order for my march, I will move gently down the stream of life, until I sleep with my fathers *."

The feeling which Washington expressed when he wrote in this strain of language, was not the mere momentary impression of the pleasure of repose after protracted toil, or of liberty after severe servitude. The active and peaceful life

* Washington's Writings, vol. ix. p. 17.

of a large landowner — occupations so full of interest and yet so void of care—domestic power attended by no jarring controversies or arduous responsibility,—the fair alliance between the mind of man and the fertility of nature—hospitality heartfelt and simple,—the noble pleasures of respectability and beneficence obtained without effort — such were assuredly his tastes, such the unvarying predilection of his heart. He would probably have chosen this mode of life—and he enjoyed it, enhanced by all the gifts of a nation's gratitude and of imperishable fame, sweet though importunate.

Ever serious and prone to the practical pursuits of life, he improved the tillage of his estate, beautified his house, attended to the local interests of Virginia, marked out the plan of that great system of internal navigation from east to west, which was one day to put the United States

* See Appendix C.

in possession of half the New World, he founded schools, arranged his papers, kept up an extensive correspondence, and took great pleasure in receiving at his table, or beneath his roof, his faithful friends. As he said to Jonathan Trumbull, junior, in alluding to the retirement of Governor Trumbull from the administration of Connecticut (5th January 1784): "Let the Governor know that it is my wish, that the mutual friendship and esteem, which have been planted and fostered in public life, may not wither and die in the security of retirement. Tell him that we should rather amuse our evening hours of life in cultivating the tender plants, and bringing them to perfection, before they are transplanted to a happier clime *."

Towards the end of 1784, M. de Lafayette went to Mount Vernon. Washington loved him

* Washington's Writings, vol. ix. p. 5.

with a paternal tenderness, of which his life bears no other example. Setting aside the services actually rendered by M. de Lafayette, the personal esteem he deserved, his amiable character, and even the devoted enthusiasm of his admiration for Washington, that accomplished and chivalrous young nobleman, who left the Court of Versailles to bear his sword and his fortune to the planters of America, singularly pleased the grave General of the Republican army. He viewed that event as a tribute paid by the nobility of the Old World to the cause and to him—he regarded it as a link between himself and the brilliant, the witty, the celebrated society of France. In the modesty of his greatness, he was at once flattered and affected by M. de Lafayette's arrival, and his thoughts were wont to dwell with emotions of peculiar fondness upon his youthful friend, so unlike any other friend of his whole life, and one who had left all to serve beside him. Nor did they separate again without a severe pang.

“In the moment of our separation, upon the road as I travelled, and every hour since, I have felt all that love, respect, and attachment for you with which length of years, close connexion, and your merits have inspired me. I often asked myself as our carriages separated, whether that was the last sight I ever should have of you. And though I wished to say no, my fears answered yes. I called to mind the days of my youth, and found they had long since fled to return no more; that I was now descending the hill I had been fifty-two years climbing, and that though I was blest with a good constitution, I was of a short-lived family, and might soon expect to be entombed in the mansion of my fathers. These thoughts darkened the shades, and gave a gloom to the picture, and consequently to my prospect of seeing you again. But I will not repine; I have had my day *.”

In spite of these melancholy forebodings, and

* Washington's Writings, vol. ix. p. 77.



in spite of his sincere taste for repose, his mind was constantly recurring to the state and the affairs of his country. It was not easy to wean himself from a spot where he had filled so conspicuous a place. "Retired as I am from the world," said he in 1786, "I frankly acknowledge I cannot feel myself an unconcerned spectator*." He was the spectator of that which deeply afflicted and alarmed him. The Confederation was declining. Congress, its only bond of union, was powerless, and dared not even use what little power was still entrusted to it. The moral weakness of the community was superadded to the political weakness of the institutions of the country. The several States relapsed into their animosities, their mistrust, their narrow and selfish views. The treaties which had sealed the independence of the nation, were imperfectly and feebly carried into execution. Debts, contracted in the Old and in

* Washington's Writings, Letter to John Jay, vol. ix. p. 189.

the New World, remained unpaid. The taxes which were to meet these engagements did not flow into the public treasury. Agriculture was paralysed; trade declined; anarchy spread. Throughout the country, whether enlightened or ignorant, whether the blame was laid on the government or on the want of government, general dissatisfaction prevailed. In Europe the reputation of the United States was rapidly sinking. It was doubted whether the United States would ever exist at all. England fostered that distrust, by which she hoped to profit at some future day.

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Great was the grief of Washington, agitated and humiliated was his heart, as if he had still been responsible for all that was occurring. "It is with the deepest and most heartfelt concern I perceive, by some late paragraphs extracted from the Boston papers, that the insurgents of Massachusetts, far from being satisfied with the redress offered by their General Court, are still acting in

open rebellion of law and government, and have obliged the chief magistrate, in a decided tone, to call upon the militia of the State to support the constitution. What, gracious God ! is man, that there should be such inconsistency and perfidiousness in his conduct ? It was but the other day that we were shedding our blood to obtain the constitutions under which we now live ; constitutions of our own choice and making ; and now we are unsheathing the sword to overturn them. The thing is so unaccountable, that I hardly know how to realise it, or to persuade myself that I am not under the illusion of a dream*.”

“ We have probably had too good an opinion of human nature in forming our confederation. Experience has taught us, that men will not adopt and carry into execution measures the best calculated for their own good, without the intervention of a coercive power. I do not conceive we can exist long

* Washington's Writings, vol. ix. p. 221.

as a nation, without having lodged somewhere a power which will pervade the whole Union in as energetic a manner as the authority of the State governments extends over the several States*."

"I think often of our situation and view it with concern. From the high ground we stood upon, from the plain path which invited our footsteps, to be so fallen, so lost, is really mortifying†."

"I feel infinitely more than I can express the disorders which have arisen in these States. Good God! who besides a Tory could have foreseen, or a Briton predicted them? * * * In regretting, which I have often done with the keenest sorrow, the death of our lamented friend General Greene, I have accompanied it of late with a query, whether he would not have preferred such an exit to the scenes, which, it is more than probable, many of his countrymen may live to bemoan ‡."

* Washington's Writings, vol. ix. p. 187.

† Ibid. p. 167.

‡ Ibid. p. 225.

Nevertheless some hope, which the course of events and the growing good sense of the public justified, shone through the gloom of patriotic sorrow; a hope indeed fraught with toil and anxiety, the only hope which the radical imperfection of human concerns allows minds of a lofty order to cherish, but which suffices to support their courage.

Throughout the Confederation the evil was felt, the remedy discerned. The jealousies of the States, local interests, old habits and democratic prejudices, were extremely repugnant to make the sacrifices which a higher and stronger organisation of the central government must necessarily impose upon them. Nevertheless the spirit of order and of union, their love of the American country, their regret at seeing it lowered in the estimation of the world, their disgust at the interminable and unproductive minor agitations of anarchy, the obvious evils they were enduring, the knowledge of their

dangers, and all the correct notions and generous sentiments which filled the mind of Washington, were diffused abroad, gained credit amongst the people, and prepared a more auspicious future. Four years had scarcely elapsed since the conclusion of that peace by which the independence of the country was ratified, when a national Convention, summoned by the general feeling of the public, met at Philadelphia for the purpose of reforming the Federal Government.

The Convention opened on the 14th of May 1787, and on the same day Washington was elected President. From the 14th May to the 17th September, this assembly, sitting every day, with closed doors, and with the purest and most rational purposes which ever animated such an undertaking, drew up the Constitution which has now governed the United States of America for fifty years. On the 30th of April 1789, at the same instant at which the Constituent Assembly of France was

opened, Washington the President of the Republic, unanimously elected, swore to preserve and to bring into activity the newly-framed constitution, in the presence of the great authorities which it had just called into existence.

No man ever rose to the pinnacle of power by a straighter path, by more universal consent, or with more extensive and uncontested influence. He hesitated much. When he laid down the command of the army, he had loudly declared and sincerely intended to live a life of quiet, aloof from public affairs. Nor was it a small effort to him to change his plan, to sacrifice his tastes and his repose for very uncertain success; perhaps to incur the imputation of inconsistency and ambition.

Congress was slow to meet; and although the election of Washington to the Presidency was known, it was not yet officially communicated to

him. "I feel," said he to his friend Henry Knox (1st April 1789) for those members of the new Congress, who hitherto have given an unavailing attendance at the theatre of action : " (the 4th of March had been appointed for the assembling of Congress, but so tardily did the members come together that a quorum of both houses was not formed till the 6th of April). "For myself the delay may be compared to a reprieve; for in confidence I tell you (with the *world* it would obtain little credit) that my movements to the chair of government will be accompanied by feelings not unlike those of a culprit who is going to the place of his execution; so unwilling am I, in the evening of a life nearly consumed in public cares, to quit a peaceful abode for an ocean of difficulties without that competency of political skill, abilities, and inclination, which are necessary to manage the helm. I am sensible that I am embarking the voice of the people and a good name of my own on this voyage; but what returns will be made

for them Heaven alone can foretell. Integrity and firmness are all I can promise. These, be the voyage long or short, shall never forsake me, although I may be deserted by all men ; for of the consolations which are to be derived from these, under any circumstances, the world cannot deprive me *."

At length the message arrived and he started. "About ten o'clock on the 16th April," says he in his Diary, "I bade adieu to Mount Vernon, to private life, and to domestic felicity ; and with a mind oppressed with more anxious and painful sensations than I have words to express, set out for New York with the best disposition to render service to my country in obedience to its call, but with less hope of answering its expectations."

His journey was a triumph : along the road, and in the cities, the whole population rushed

* Washington's Writings, vol. ix. p. 488.

out to meet him, to salute him, to pray for him. He entered New York, attended by the Commissioners of Congress, in an ornamented barge, rowed by thirteen pilots in white uniforms, as the representatives of the thirteen States, amidst an enormous concourse of people assembled in the harbour and on the shore: but his frame of mind remained unchanged. "The motion of the boat," says he in his journal, "the flags on the shipping, the strains of music, the roar of cannon, the loud acclamations of the people as I passed, filled my mind with emotions as painful as they were agreeable, for I thought on the scenes of a totally opposite character which would perhaps occur at some future day, in spite of all my efforts to do good."

Nearly a century and half before, on the banks of the Thames, a like crowd and like demonstrations of joy attended the procession of Oliver Cromwell, the Protector of the Commonwealth of

England. "What crowds! what acclamations!" said the flatterers of the Protector; and Cromwell replied, 'There would be more to see me hung!' An analogy how strange, a contrast how glorious, between the feelings and the language of the bad great man and the man great and good!

Washington had reason to enter with anxiety upon the task which he had undertaken. The supreme dignity of human nature consists in the penetration of the sage joined to the self-devotion of the hero. The nation which he had led to independence, and which now demanded a government at his hands, was scarcely formed when it had to undergo one of those great social changes which render futurity so obscure, and power so dangerous to wield.

It has been often asserted and commonly believed, that in the British Colonies, before the

separation from the mother-country, the state of society and of the public mind was essentially republican, and entirely prepared for that new form of government. But a republican government may rule, and in point of fact has ruled, communities of extreme diversity: and the same community may undergo great transformations without ceasing to live under republican institutions.

The English colonies almost all displayed an equally decided predilection for a republican constitution. In the North of the Union and in the South, in Virginia and the Carolinas as in Connecticut and Massachusetts, the choice of the people as to their form of government was the same. Nevertheless, and the remark has not unfrequently been made, considered in their social organisation, by the condition and the mutual relations of the inhabitants, these colonies were exceedingly different.

In the South, especially in Virginia and the Carolinas, the soil generally belonged to large landed proprietors, surrounded by slaves or small husbandmen. The laws of entail and primogeniture perpetuated families. The civil legislation of England, strongly marked by its feudal origin, had been maintained almost without reserve. The whole state of society was aristocratic.

In the North, on the contrary, in Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island, the Pilgrim-fathers had introduced and implanted their democratic severity together with their religious fervour. In those plantations there was no slavery, no large landowners surrounded by a population of inferior rank, no land tied up in the families of its proprietors, no episcopal and established church, no social distinctions legally instituted and maintained; but man was left to be what his own works and the grace of Heaven made him—the spirit of independence and equality

was transfused from the spiritual to the civil institutions of society. Nevertheless even in the Northern Colonies, and under the dominion of the principles of puritanism, other causes, which have too often been overlooked, weakened these characteristics of their social condition and checked its complete development. Wide, very wide, is the distinction, between the spirit of democracy in religion and the spirit of pure political democracy. However ardent, however fierce may be the former, it draws its origin from, and it retains in its action, a powerful element of subordination and order, namely Respect. In spite of their pride the Puritans bowed day by day before a master, to whom they subjected their thoughts, their hearts, their lives ; and on the shores of America, when they no longer had to defend their independence against the power of man, when they governed themselves in the presence of their God, the sincerity of their faith and their austere morality resisted the tendency of democracy to

personal arrogance and licence. The authorities of those communities, however jealously watched, however readily displaced, rested on one point which made them firm and even harsh in the exercise of their power. In the bosom of those families, however jealous of their rights, however hostile to all political ostentation and all conventional greatness, the paternal authority was strong and respected, and it was rather strengthened than limited by the laws. Entails and the unequal distribution of the property of intestates were abolished ; but the father enjoyed an indefeasible right of dividing his property amongst his children as he pleased. Generally speaking the laws of the community were not subservient to its political maxims, and they preserved some traces of its former manners. So that the spirit of democracy, however predominant, was everywhere met by checks and obstacles.

Moreover, a circumstance connected with the

physical condition of the country, transient in its occurrence but decisive in its consequences, dissembled the presence and retarded the dominion of the democratic element. In the cities, there was no mob ; in the rural districts, the population was gathered about the chief planters, who were commonly the original grantees of the soil and invested with the authority of local magistrates. The principles of society were democratic ; but the positions of the various members of the community were far less so. Instruments were wanting to apply those principles. A considerable degree of influence still attached itself to the higher ranks of society ; and on the other hand, the numerical importance of the mass was not yet sufficiently great to turn the scale.

But the revolution, by hurrying onwards the course of events, gave to American society a general and rapid impulse towards democracy. In the States in which the aristocratic element

was still powerful, as in Virginia, it was instantly attacked and subdued. Entails were abolished; the Church lost, not only its privileges, but its official connexion with the State. The principle of election extended itself throughout the administration. The suffrage was greatly extended; and the civil legislation of the country, without undergoing a radical change, tended more and more to equality.


The progress of democracy was still more decided in the circumstances of the country, than in its laws. In the cities population was rapidly increasing, and in that population the mob. In the country, towards the West, beyond the Alleghany mountains, new states were formed or prepared by a constant and accelerated stream of immigration consisting of scattered adventurers, everywhere waging war with the untutored strength of nature and the fierce hostility of the savages, themselves half savages, unacquainted with the forms or the

restraints of dense and civilized communities, abandoned to the selfishness of their solitude and of their passions, bold, haughty, rude, impetuous. Thus in every direction, from the sea-coast to the depths of the continent, in the great centres of population and in the scarcely-trodden forests, amidst the press of commercial activity or the tranquillity of rural life, the principles of numerical strength, private individual importance, personal independence, and primitive equality, in short all the elements of democracy, were growing up, spreading abroad, and assuming in the state and in the institutions of the country the place allotted to them there, but which they had not at first occupied.


Again, in the sphere of the intellect, the same movement, but far more accelerated, urged on the public mind ; and the notions of the people outstripped the circumstances of the country. Even in the wisest and most civilized of the States, the

most radical theories gained not only favour but authority. "A letter," writes Washington to Madison, "which I have received from General Knox, who had just returned from Massachusetts, whither he had been sent by Congress in consequence of the commotions in that State, is replete with melancholy accounts of the temper and designs of a considerable part of the people. Amongst other things he says, 'Their creed is, that the property of the United States has been protected from the confiscations of Britain by the joint exertions of *all*, and therefore ought to be *the common property of all*; and he that attempts opposition to this creed, is an enemy to equity and justice, and ought to be swept from the face of the earth.'

Again, 'They are determined to annihilate all debts, public and private, and have agrarian laws, which are easily effected by the means of unfunded paper money, which shall be a tender in all cases whatever.' He adds, 'The number of these people amounts in Massachusetts to about one fifth part



of several populous counties, and to them may be collected people of similar sentiments from the States of Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New Hampshire, so as to constitute a body of about twelve or fifteen thousand desperate and unprincipled men. They are chiefly the young and active part of the community.' How melancholy is the reflection that in so short a time we should have made such large strides towards fulfilling the predictions of our transatlantic foes ! ' Leave them to themselves, and their government will soon dissolve.' Will not the wise and good strive hard to avert this evil ? Or will their supineness suffer ignorance and the arts of self-interested, designing, disaffected, and desperate characters, to involve this great country in wretchedness and contempt ? What stronger evidence can be given of the want of energy in our government, than these disorders ? If there is not power in it to check them, what security has a man for life, liberty, or property ? To you I am sure I need not add aught on this




subject. The consequence of a lax or inefficient government are too obvious to be dwelt upon. Thirteen sovereignties pulling against each other, and all tugging at the federal head, will soon bring ruin on the whole : whereas a liberal and energetic constitution, well checked and well watched to prevent encroachments, might restore us to that degree of respectability and consequence, to which we had the fairest prospect of attaining *."

The evil appeared of so serious a character, that the most intimate friend of Jefferson, a man whom the democratic party afterwards reckoned amongst its leaders, Madison himself, to whom these remarks were addressed, looked upon the American community as all but lost, and scarcely dared to hope that it would survive†. " If the lessons which this intelligence inculcates," said he in reply, " should not work the proper impression on the American public, it will be a proof that our case is desperate."

* Washington's Writings, vol. ix. p. 207. † Ibid. p. 208.

Two elements concur to maintain and to foster the existence of a people ; its civil constitution and its political system—the social influences and the public authorities. The latter of these elements was even more deficient in the youthful State of America than the former. In that agitated and disunited community, the former government had disappeared, but the new one was yet unformed. I have adverted to the nullity of Congress, the only bond of union between the States, the only central power, but a power destitute of rights and of strength ; signing treaties, accrediting ambassadors, declaring that the public weal required certain laws, certain supplies, a certain army, but having by its own authority neither laws to pass, nor judges nor officers to put those laws in force, nor supplies to remunerate those ambassadors, judges, or officers, nor troops to enforce the levy of the supplies, or the respect due to the laws, the judges, the officers of government. The body politic was even more



feeble and unstable than the social condition of the country.

The constitution was framed to remedy this evil, and to give a government to the Union. Two great ends were achieved by it. The central government became a real power and assumed its proper rank. The constitution disentangled it from the governments of the States, invested it with a direct mode of action upon the community without the interference of the local powers, and secured to it the necessary means of carrying its intentions into execution, namely, supplies, judges, public officers, and troops. The peculiar and internal organisation of the central government was ably conceived and ably balanced; the rights and reciprocal relations of the several powers were regulated with great sagacity, and with a vigorous comprehension of the conditions of social order and political vitality—at least under the republican form of government, and

for the community to which the constitution was adapted.

Upon comparing the constitution of the United States with the anarchy which preceded it, it is impossible to bestow too much admiration on the wisdom of its authors, and of the generation of men by whom they had been chosen and were supported.

But this constitution, though adopted and promulgated, was as yet a dead letter; it supplied arms against the evil, but the evil still subsisted. The great powers it had created were still in presence of the circumstances which had preceded it, and had rendered it so necessary,—in presence of the parties which those circumstances had engendered, and which still struggled to shape society and the constitution itself to their own particular bent.

At first sight the designations of these parties

are unaccountable: between Federalism and Democracy, between these two qualities, these two tendencies, there would seem to be no real or essential opposition. In Holland in the 17th century, and in Switzerland at the present day, the democratic party is that which is bent upon strengthening the federal bond, the central government; the aristocratic party stands at the head of the local governments and defends their sovereignty. The Dutch people supported William of Nassau and the Stadtholdership against John de Witt and the great burghers of the towns. The patricians of Schwitz and Uri are the most obstinate foes of the federal diet and of its authority.

Parties in America have frequently assumed other designations in their contests. The democratic party arrogated to itself the title of republicans, and treated its opponents as the party of monarchy or monocracy. The federal party styled its adversaries anti-unionists. They accused each

other reciprocally of a tendency to monarchy or to dissolve the confederation—of a design to subvert either the Republic on the one hand or the Union on the other. These were however but senseless prejudices or party tricks: both one party and the other were sincerely desirous of maintaining republican institutions and the cohesion of the States. The names by which they attempted to decry their adversaries were even more false than their original denominations were imperfect and incorrectly opposed to each other.

Practically and in the immediate concerns of the country, they differed less than they said, or than their hatred taught them to suppose. But at bottom, the difference between their principles and tendencies was essential and permanent. The federalist party was at the same time an aristocratic party, favourable to the preponderance of the higher classes as well as to the strength of the central power. The

democratic party was at the same time the local party, setting up at once for the supremacy of numbers, and the all but complete independence of the State Governments. Thus the controversy between them involved the social as well as the political order of things, the very constitution of society as well as its government. Thus the supreme eternal questions, which have agitated and will ever agitate the world, and which are connected with the far higher problem of the nature and the destiny of man, all lay at stake between the parties into which the American community was divided, and were all concealed under their designations.

It was in the midst of this community, thus agitated and excited, that Washington with no ambition, no illusions, from duty rather than from taste, confiding in the truth rather than presuming on success, undertook to establish, *de facto*, the government which a constitution, born of yesterday, had so recently promulgated.

He rose to the supreme power, invested with immense influence, acknowledged, admitted even by his adversaries ;—but it was himself who gave utterance to the profound truth, “INFLUENCE is not GOVERNMENT*.”

In the strife of parties, the questions connected with the internal structure of society engaged but little of his attention. Such questions are of so obscure and abstruse a nature, that they are only clearly revealed to the meditations of the philosopher, when he has passed in review the long pageant of human societies under all their various forms and in all ages. Washington was but little accustomed to contemplation or to scientific research. In 1787, before he went to the Convention at Philadelphia, he undertook, for his own instruction, to study the constitutions of the chief confederations in ancient and in modern history ; the notes of this inquiry,

* Washington's Writings. Letter to Henry Lee, vol. ix. p. 204.

which were found amongst his papers, show that he sought rather to collect facts in support of the simple views of his own reason, than to penetrate into the internal elements of those complicated associations.

Moreover, the natural bent of the character of Washington tended to a democratic state of society in preference to any other. With a mind straightforward rather than enlarged, a heart calm and just, dignified, but exempt from every passionate or arrogant pretension, more solicitous of respect than of dominion, the equity and the simplicity of democratic maxims and manners, far from annoying or embarrassing him, was congenial to his tastes, and satisfactory to his reason. He cared not to inquire, with the partisans of the aristocratic system, whether more scientific combinations, classifications, privileges, and artificial barriers, were necessary to the maintenance of society. He lived

at peace amidst an equal and sovereign people, acknowledging the legality of their sway, and submitting to it without an effort.

But when the question was changed from the order of society to the political order of the State, when the organisation of the government was at stake, he was a decided Federalist, opposed to local and popular claims, a declared partisan of the unity and the strength of the central government.

Under that banner he rose, and he rose to ensure its triumph. Yet his elevation was no party victory, nor did it excite in any mind the exultation or the grief of a party contest. In the eyes, not only of the public, but of his adversaries, he was beyond and above all parties: "I told him," says Jefferson, "that he was the only man in the United States who possessed the confidence of the whole; that there was no other

person who would be thought anything more than the head of a party*.”

The exertions of Washington had been constantly directed to earn this glorious privilege: “It is my wish to have my mind and my actions, which are the result of reflection, as free and independent as the air†.”

“I declare to you that if it should be my inevitable fate to administer the government (for Heaven knows that no event can be less desired by me, and that no earthly consideration short of so general a call, together with a desire to reconcile contending parties as far as in me lies, could again bring me into public life), I will go to the chair under no pre-engagement of any kind or nature whatsoever‡.”

* Jefferson's Memoirs, vol. iv. p. 481.

† Washington's Writings, vol. ix. p. 34.

‡ Ibid. p. 476.

“ Conscious of my integrity, I would willingly hope that nothing may occur to give me anxiety ; but should anything present itself I shall never undertake the painful task of recrimination, nor do I know that I should even enter upon my justification*.”——“ The best way to disconcert and defeat them is to take no notice of such publications. All else is but food for declamation †.”

“ Men’s minds are as variant as their faces, and where the motives of their actions are pure, the operation of the former are no more to be imputed to them as a crime, than the appearance of the latter ; for both being the work of nature, are alike unavoidable. Liberality and charity, instead of clamour and misrepresentation (which latter serve only to foment the passions without enlightening the understanding), ought to govern in all disputes about matters of importance ‡.”

“ Differences in political opinions are as unavoid-

* Washington’s Writings, vol. ix. p. 108.

† Ibid. p. 148.

‡ Ibid. p. 475.

able as, to a certain extent, they may perhaps be necessary; but it is exceedingly to be regretted, that subjects cannot be discussed with temper on the one hand, or decisions submitted to without having the motives, which led to them, improperly implicated on the other. When matters get to such lengths, the natural inference is, that both sides have strained the cords beyond their bearing, and that a middle course would be found the best, until experience shall have decided on the right way*." " My earnest wish and my fondest hope is that, instead of wounding suspicions and irritating charges, there may be liberal allowances, mutual forbearances, and temporising yieldings on all sides. Under the exercise of these, matters will go on smoothly, and, if possible, more prosperously; without them everything must rest; the wheels of government will clog; our enemies will triumph, and by throwing their weight into the disaffected scale, may accomplish

* Washington's Writings. Letter to Hamilton, vol.



the ruin of the goodly fabric we have been erecting *."

Thus a stranger to all personal polemics, a stranger alike to the passions and prejudices of his friends and of his adversaries, his whole policy consisted in maintaining this position : and to that policy he gave its right name when he called it "THE JUST MEDIUM †." It is much to wish to keep to the just medium, but the wish, however well-concerted and however firm, does not always suffice to accomplish its object. Washington succeeded as much by his natural turn of mind and character as by his own deliberate purpose ; he was really and indeed beyond the reach of parties ; and his country did no more than due homage to the truth, when it formed that opinion of him.

* Washington's Writings, vol. x. p. 281. Letter to Jefferson.

† Ibid., p. 236.

With all the eminent qualities of a man of experience and of action, his mind was distinguished by the admirable correctness of its judgment, without any pretensions to systematic. No predetermined course, no principle laid down beforehand, governed his actions. Hence there was nothing of logical stubbornness in his conduct ; he was pledged to no engagements of vanity or intellectual superiority. When he prevailed, his success did not affect his opponents as a lost game or a sweeping censure : his triumph was obtained, not in the name of the superiority of his powers, but by the force of events and the necessity which they presented.

Yet his triumphs were not mere occurrences devoid of moral meaning, the simple consequence of well-adapted plans, or superior strength, or chance. He knew nought of theory, but he trusted in the truth, and took truth as the guide of his conduct. He did not follow up the success

of one principle to crush the adherents of the opposite principle; nor did he act with a view to interest alone or to mere success. He did nothing which he did not believe to be reasonable and right; so that his actions, though devoid of that systematic character which might have humiliated his adversaries, had notwithstanding a high moral character which commanded respect.

Moreover, the strongest conviction was entertained by all of his entire disinterestedness—a beacon-light to which men willingly confide their trust—a mighty centre to attract their minds, and at the same time to secure their interests, for it assures them that they will not be offered up, either as a sacrifice or as an instrument, to promote the views of personal ambition.

His first measure, the formation of his cabinet, was the most incontrovertible proof of his impar-

tiality. Four men were summoned to join it: Hamilton and Knox, of Federalist principles; Jefferson and Randolph, of the democratic party. Knox, an honest soldier, but a man of second-rate abilities and docile character; Randolph, a man of unsteady mind, questionable honesty, and indifferent faith; Jefferson and Hamilton, both honest, sincere, passionate, and able—the real leaders of the two parties.

Hamilton deserves to be ranked amongst the men who have best understood the vital principles and fundamental conditions of government—not of a hap-hazard government, but of a government worthy of its task and of the name. There is not one element of order, strength, and durability in the constitution of the United States, which he did not powerfully contribute to introduce into the scheme and cause to be adopted. Perhaps he thought that the monarchical was preferable to the republican form: perhaps he was

doubted of the success of the experiment which was being tried in his country: perhaps too he was carried away by the liveliness of his imagination and the logical ardour of his understanding, till his views sometimes became exclusive, his deductions extreme. But no less lofty in character than in intellect, he served the commonwealth with faithful zeal, and laboured to found, not to enfeeble, it. His superiority consisted in knowing that naturally, and by the essential law of things, political power stands aloft, at the head of society; that according to this law it ought to be established; and that all systems and all attempts of a contrary tendency, must ultimately carry disturbance and debility into society itself. His mistake was to adhere too closely, with somewhat too much of arrogance and obstinacy, to the model of the English constitution; to attach an equal authority to the good and to the bad portions of that model, to its principles and to its abuses; and not to make sufficient allowance for,

nor to trust with sufficient confidence to, the variety of political forms or the flexibility of human society. There are times at which political genius consists in not dreading what is new, as well as in respecting what is eternal.

The democratic party, not I mean of the rude and turbulent democracy of antiquity or of the middle ages, but of the great democracy of the modern world, has no more faithful or eminent representative than Jefferson. A warm friend of humanity, of freedom, and of science; confiding in their virtue no less than in their right; deeply affected by the injuries which the mass of men have suffered, by the hardships they endure, and constantly engaged, with laudable disinterestedness, in the attempt to repair the evil or to avert the recurrence of it; tolerating the authority of government as a necessity to be viewed with distrust—almost as an evil contrived to check another evil. and endeavouring not only to restrain, but to

lower it; mistrusting all greatness and all personal splendour as the harbinger of usurpation; in heart, frank, kind and indulgent, though apt to take up prejudices and animosities against the opponents of his party; in mind, bold, quick, ingenious and inquiring, more remarkable for penetration than for foresight, but too sensible to carry things to extremes, and able to meet urgent evils and dangers, by summoning up a degree of prudence and firmness, which, if earlier and more generally exerted, might perhaps have prevented them.

It was no easy task to make these two men act together in the same cabinet. The very critical state of affairs at the outset of the constitution, and the impartial preponderance of Washington, could alone accomplish it. He applied himself to this purpose with consummate perseverance and sagacity. At bottom, he entertained a decided preference for Hamilton and his principles. "By some he is considered as an ambitious man; and

therefore a dangerous one. That he is ambitious, I shall readily grant, but it is of that laudable kind which prompts a man to excel in whatever he takes in hand. He is enterprising, quick in his perceptions, and his judgment intuitively great*.

But it was not till 1798, in the freedom of his retirement, that Washington held this explicit language. As long as he was at the head of affairs, and between his two secretaries of state, he observed an extreme reserve towards them, and gave them equal marks of his confidence. He thought them both sincere and able men ; both necessary to the country and to himself. Jefferson not only furnished him with a sort of tie, a means of influence over the popular party, which soon afterwards became the opposition ; but Washington availed himself of his opinions as a counterpoise to the tendencies, and especially to the expressions, of Hamilton.

* Washington's Writings, vol. xi. p. 312.

and his friends, which were sometimes exaggerated and intemperate. He was in the habit of conversing with and consulting them apart on the affairs which were to be debated between them in common, in order to remove or to lessen the causes of dissension beforehand. He knew how to use the merits or the popularity of each of them with their own party, so as to redound to the general advantage of the government, and even to their mutual benefit. He adroitly seized every opportunity of involving them in a common responsibility: and when a rupture appeared to be the inevitable result of too deep dissensions or over-excited passions, he interposed, he exhorted, he entreated, and by his personal influence, by a frank and touching appeal to the patriotism and the good feelings of the two rivals, at least he retarded the eruption of the evil which he could not cure.

He dealt with events with the same prudence

and precaution which he showed towards men: careful of his own personal position, raising no premature or superfluous questions, undisturbed by the restless desire of settling and governing every detail, allowing the great bodies of the State, the local governments, and his own agents, to act in their several spheres, and never pledging his own opinion and responsibility without a clear absolute necessity. Yet this policy, however impartial, however reserved, and attentive to avoid compromising either events, or its own course of action, was not the policy of a listless, vacillating, or incoherent administration, seeking and receiving fresh advice and a different impulse on every side. No government, on the contrary, was ever more decided, more active, more steadfast in its principles, more effectual in its decisions.

That government had been formed to put down anarchy, and to strengthen the federal central power. To this purpose it was for

last. At the very outset, in the first session of Congress, questions of great weight arose in considerable numbers ; the constitution required to be brought into full play. The relations to be established between the two Houses and the President, the mode of communication between the President and the Senate, on the subject of treaties and the great appointments, the organisation of the judicial power, the creation of the several ministerial departments—all these points were discussed and determined ; and in this great undertaking the constitution was surrendered, as it were, a second time to the strife of parties. Without ostentation, without intrigue, without an attempt at encroachment, but full of foresight and firm in defence of the power entrusted to him, Washington powerfully contributed, by his conversation and by his declared support of sound principles, to complete the work in the same spirit in which it had originated, the establishment of a strong and dignified government.

His practice corresponded to his principles. Once engaged in business and with parties, the same man who had shown such latitude in the formation of his cabinet, adopted and enforced a vigorous uniformity of purpose and conduct in his administration. "I shall not, whilst I have the honour to administer the government, bring a man into any office of consequence knowingly, whose political tenets are adverse to the measures which the general government are pursuing; for this, in my opinion, would be a sort of political suicide*."

And in 1795 he wrote as follows to Gouverneur Morris, then Minister of the United States in London. "In a government as free as ours, where the people are at liberty and will express their sentiments (oftentimes imprudently, and, for want of information, sometimes unjustly), allowances must be made for occasional effervescences; but

* Washington's Writings, vol. xi. p. 74.

declaration which I have made of my political creed, you can run no hazard in asserting, that the executive branch of this government never has suffered nor will suffer, while I preside, any improper conduct of its officers to escape with impunity, nor give its sanctions to any disorderly proceedings of its citizens."

"By the firm adherence to these principles, and to the neutral policy which has been adopted, I have brought on myself a torrent of abuse in the factious papers in this country, and from the enmity of the discontented of all descriptions. But, having no sinister objects in view, I shall not be diverted from my course by these, nor any attempts which are or shall be made to withdraw the confidence of my constituents from me. I have nothing to ask; and discharging my duty, I have nothing to fear from invective. The acts of my administration will appear when I am no more, and the intelligent and candid part of mankind

will not condemn my conduct without recurring to them.”*

Even in matters of pure formality, however foreign to the habits of his life, he was enlightened and guided by that tact and instinctive sense of propriety, which also rank amongst the conditions of statesmanship. Upon his election, the ceremonial etiquette, which was to be observed towards the person of the President, became a serious topic of debate between the two parties. Many of the Federalists, avowed partisans of the precedents and the splendour of monarchy, exulted when they succeeded at a ball in placing a sofa raised above the floor by two steps, which was reserved for Washington and his wife†. Many of the democrats regarded these displays and the public levees of the President as signs of the premeditated return of tyranny; and they

* Washington's Writings, vol. xi. p. 103.

† Jefferson's Memoirs, vol. iv. p. 499.

were indignant at the stiff and slight bow with which he received those who waited upon him at a fixed time in his own house*. Washington smiled alike at the exultation of the former and the apprehensions of the latter, whilst he persevered in the very modest regulations which he had laid down :—

“ If I were to give indulgence to my inclinations, every moment that I could withdraw from the fatigue of my station should be spent in retirement. That it is not, proceeds from the sense I entertain of the propriety of giving to every one as free access as consists with that respect which is due to the chair of government; and that respect is neither to be acquired nor preserved but by observing a just medium between much state and too much familiarity†.”

* Washington's Writings, vol. x. p. 99.

† Ibid. p. 100. See Appendix D.

Difficulties of more serious importance soon put his firmness to a severer trial. After the establishment of the constitution, the finances of the country were a question of first-rate gravity, perhaps the weightiest of all questions, to the commonwealth. They were in a state of extreme disorder : debts of the Union to foreign and to American creditors : debts of the several States, contracted in their own names, but for the purpose of assisting the common cause ; promissory notes for supplies to the troops ; army contracts, arrears of interest, and various outstanding claims of different kinds, of different origin, imperfectly known, and unliquidated : and after having toiled through this chaos, a total absence of certain or adequate revenues to meet the burdens which it imposed.

Many men, and to say the truth the democratic party in general, were opposed to the admission of all these claims, and even resisted the proposal to

concentrate the debts, for the purpose of instituting due inquiry into this vast confusion. They were for leaving each State encumbered with its own debt, however unequally the burden would then have been distributed : they were for establishing distinctions and classifications between the creditors, arising from the nature of their claims, and the actual amount of their disbursements :—in short they were for all those measures which, under pretence of scrupulous inquiry and rigid justice, are at bottom mere subterfuges to elude and reduce the engagements contracted by the State.

As Secretary of the Treasury, Hamilton proposed a contrary system :—viz., the concentration on the credit of the Union, and the integral payment of the whole of the debts *bonâ fide* contracted for the common cause, whether foreign or American, whoever the contractors and the holders might be, or on whatever terms they might have

originated ; the imposition of taxes sufficient to meet the public debt and to pay it off ; the establishment of a national bank capable of seconding the government in its financial operations and of supporting the public credit.

This system was the only moral one, the only sincere one, the only one which was conformable to honesty and truth. It went to consolidate the Union, by uniting the States financially, as they were united politically. It laid the foundations of American credit, by this great example of fidelity to public engagements, and by the pledges which it gave to their due performance. It strengthened the central government by rallying the men of capital about it, and by investing it with powerful means of influence over them, and by their agency.

To the first of these motives the opponents of Hamilton's scheme dared not openly object :

but they attempted to lessen the authority of the principle he had laid down, by contesting the equal validity of the claims, by calling in question the morality of the creditors, and by protesting against taxation. As partisans of the system of local independence, they reprobated instead of applauding the political consequences of the financial union; and they urged, on the ground of general principle, that the States should be left, in their past as well as in their future transactions, to meet the various chances of their situation and of their destiny.

The credit of America appeared to them to be purchased at too dear a rate: it might be obtained, they alleged, by less onerous and more simple means: and they censured the views of Hamilton on credit, on the public debts, on the sinking fund, and on banking, as perplexing and mistaken theories.

But the last consequence of the system was that which peculiarly excited their disapprobation. Aristocracy of wealth is a dangerous ally to a government, for it is that which commands least respect, and excites most envy. In proposing to pay the national debt, the Federalist party had the principles of morality and honour on their side. But when the national debt, and the financial operations to which it gave rise, became a means of making rapid fortunes, and possibly of improper influence, the pretension to strictness of moral principle passed over to the side of the democratic party, and the claims of honesty were zealously put forward in its support.

Hamilton carried on the contest with his wonted energy, no less pure than he was persuaded, even more earnest as a party leader than as a financier, and absorbed by his political object above every other motive, even in the administration of the public monies—the foundation of the State and

the strength of the Government to which he belonged.

The perplexity of Washington was great. Unversed in financial pursuits, he possessed no personal or scientific opinion on the intrinsic merit of the proposed measures. He felt their equity and their political utility. He placed confidence in Hamilton, in his judgment and in his virtue. Nevertheless, as the discussion was protracted and as objections to the scheme were multiplied, some of them puzzled his understanding, others alarmed his conscience ; and he began to ask himself, not without embarrassment, whether the plan of the government was entirely right.

I know not which is more worthy of admiration, the impartiality which awakened these doubts in his mind, or the firmness with which, as the final result of his deliberate survey of all the circumstances, he ever supported Hamilton and his mea-


asures. Such a course was that of a great politician. For even were it true that some erroneous conceptions were mixed up with the plans of the Secretary of the Treasury, and that some abuses occurred in their execution, yet a truth of far higher moment predominated over that fact: by laying the foundations of public credit, and by the intimate union of the administration of the finances with the policy of the State, he gave to the new government, at the very outset of its existence, the standing of an old and well-established power.

The success of the measure exceeded their most aspiring hopes. The public mind was restored to tranquillity, business to a state of activity, and the administration to order. Agriculture and trade resumed their growth; the credit of the American people rapidly rose; the community prospered in true confidence, for it felt that it was governed and that it was free. The country and the

government grew side by side, in that excellent harmony which constitutes the health of States.

Washington saw with his own eyes, on every point of the American territory, this glorious and delightful spectacle. Thrice he travelled slowly over the whole Union, received in every part of it with that grateful and affectionate admiration which is the only reward worthy to touch the heart of a statesman: "I am much pleased that I have undertaken this journey, as it has enabled me to see with my own eyes the situation of the country through which we travelled, and to learn more accurately the disposition of the people than I could from any information.

"The country appears to be in a very improving state, and industry and frugality are becoming much more fashionable than they have hitherto been there. Tranquillity reigns among the people



with that disposition towards the general government which is likely to preserve it. They begin to feel the good effects of equal laws and equal protection. The farmer finds a ready market for his produce, and the merchant calculates with more certainty on his payments. Each day's experience of the government of the United States seems to confirm its establishment and to render it more popular. A ready acquiescence in the laws made under it shows in a strong light the confidence which the people have in their representatives, and in the upright views of those who administer the government*."

Almost at the same time, as if Providence had designed that a similar testimony should descend from various sources to posterity, Jefferson wrote, "In general, our affairs are proceeding in a train of unexampled prosperity. This arises from the

* Washington's Writings, vol. x. p. 170.



real improvement of our government, from the unbounded confidence reposed in it by the people, their zeal to support it, and their conviction that a solid union is the best rock of their safety ; from the favourable seasons which for some years past have co-operated with a fertile soil and genial climate to increase the productions of agriculture, and from the growth of industry, economy, and domestic manufactures. So that I believe I may say, with truth, that there is not a nation under the sun enjoying more present prosperity, nor with more in prospect*."

Accordingly when the Presidency of Washington drew near to its close, when the necessity of again naming a Chief Magistrate of the Commonwealth became urgent, he was entreated, by the general impulse, once more to accept the burden of office. An impulse, indeed, proceeding from very different

* Jefferson's Memoirs, vol. iii. p. 113.

causes, notwithstanding its apparent unanimity; the Federalist party sought to remain in power; the Democratic opposition felt that the time was not yet come for them to aspire to form an administration, and that the country could not forego either the policy or the man, against whom, notwithstanding, they were fully determined to direct their attacks. The public dreaded the interruption of that order and that prosperity, which were so precious but still so precarious. Yet whether overt or concealed, whether patriotic or interested, sincere or hypocritical, the feelings and the opinions of all concurred to promote the same purpose.

Washington alone hesitated. His tranquil intellect was of the most penetrating kind, and his disinterestedness maintained it free and unbiassed by any illusions as to himself or as to events. The brilliant appearances, nay even the real prosperity, of the public interests did not con-

ceal from his eyes the approaching perils of the posture of affairs. Abroad, the tumult of the French Revolution already stirred the American people. Inevitable hostilities against the Indians, which had been at first injudiciously carried on, demanded considerable efforts. In the cabinet, the differences between Jefferson and Hamilton had become extremely warm ; the most earnest exhortations of the President failed to repress them ; and they broke out, with almost an official character, in two newspapers, the *National Gazette* and the *Gazette of the United States*, which carried on a fierce warfare in the names of the two rivals ; a writer of the name of Freneau, who held office under Jefferson, was known to be the editor of the former journal.

Thus encouraged, the opposition press gave way to the bitterest violence ; insomuch as to occasion the greatest anxiety to Washington. " The seeds of discontent, distrust, and irritation," writes he to

Randolph, the Attorney General, "which are so plentifully sown, can scarcely fail to have the effect of rending the Union asunder, and to mar that prospect of happiness which perhaps never beamed with more effulgence upon any people under the sun. In a word, if government and the officers of it are to be constant themes for newspaper abuse, and this too without condescending to investigate the motives or the facts, it will be impossible I conceive for any man living to manage the helm, or to keep the machine together*."

In some parts of the country, especially in the west of Pennsylvania, one of the taxes voted to defray the public debt had awakened a spirit of sedition: numerous meetings had passed resolutions declaring their refusal to pay it; and Washington had been compelled on the other hand to announce, by solemn proclamation, that he would

* Washington's Writings, vol. x. p. 287. Letter to Edmund Randolph.

maintain the execution of the laws. In Congress itself the administration no longer met with the same constant and effectual support; Hamilton was the object of attacks of daily increasing vehemence; the opposition failed in the motions brought against him, but on the other hand his own propositions were not always carried. Lastly, the language of the House of Representatives to Washington himself, though it was always marked by respect and regard, had lost much of its depth and warmth of feeling: on the 22nd February 1793, which was his birth-day, a motion to adjourn the House for half an hour, in order to pay the usual compliment to him on that occasion, was strongly opposed, and carried by a majority of only three-and-twenty votes.

None of these circumstances, of these symptoms, escaped the vigilant sagacity of Washington. His natural predilection for private life and the repose of Mount Vernon was redoubled by them.


His past success, far from emboldening him, rendered him more timid for the future. Modestly but passionately attached to his dignity and his fame, he did not choose that it should suffer the slightest waning. Universal entreaty would not have sufficed to induce him to accept the government; his personal conviction, the common good, the evident interest of affairs, the desire or rather the duty of carrying on a little further his still unstable work, could alone be balanced in his mind against the suggestions of his prudence and his choice. He weighed these various motives, and debated them in his mind, with more harassing solicitude than his nature seemed to admit of, till at last he exclaimed in the pious lassitude of his thoughts: "As the Allwise Disposer of events has hitherto watched over my steps, I trust, that in the important one I may soon be called upon to take, he will mark the course so plainly, as that I cannot mistake the way*."

* Washington's Writings. Letter to Edmund Randolph, vol. x. p. 286.

He was unanimously re-elected, and he resumed his load with the same disinterestedness, the same intrepidity, and, notwithstanding his success, perhaps with less confidence, than the first time. He had a just presentiment of the trials which awaited him.

There are events which Providence does not allow contemporaries to understand—events so great and complex that they long remain unfathomed by the mind of man, and, even whilst they are bursting upon the world, are still enshrouded by the gloom which hangs about the hidden preparation of those mighty changes which determine the destinies of mankind.

Such an event was the French Revolution—who has measured it? whose opinion, whose expectation has it not a hundred times deceived, whether of friends or enemies, whether of partisans or of assailants? When the human mind and human



society are stirred up and roused to such a pitch, the consequences are things which no imagination had conceived, which no deliberate purpose could embrace.

But what we have learned by experience, Washington discerned from the very first. The French Revolution was hardly begun, when he at once suspended his judgment and assumed a position aloof from all the parties, from all the spectators of the time, untouched alike by the arrogance of their predictions, the blindness of their animosity or of their hopes. "You are right in conceiving," said he to the Marquis de Luzerne, at the outset of the Revolution, "that nothing can be indifferent to me which regards the welfare of the French nation. So far removed as I am from that great theatre of political action, and so little acquainted with many of the minute circumstances which may induce important decisions, it would be imprudent in me to hazard

opinions, which might possibly be unfounded. Indeed the whole business is so extraordinary in its commencement, so wonderful in its progress, and may be so stupendous in its consequences, that I am almost lost in contemplation*."

And at a still earlier period to Gouverneur Morris: "The revolution which has been effected in France is of so wonderful a nature, that the mind can hardly realise the fact. If it ends, as our last accounts, to 1st August (1789), predict, that nation will be the most powerful and happy in Europe; but I fear, though it has gone triumphantly through the first paroxysm, it is not the last it has to encounter before matters are finally settled. In a word, the revolution is of too great a magnitude to be effected in so short a space, and with the loss of so little blood. The mortification of the king, the intrigues of the queen, and the

* Washington's Writings, vol. x. p. 89.

discontent of the princes and the noblesse, will foment divisions if possible in the National Assembly; and they will unquestionably avail themselves of every *faux pas* in the formation of the constitution, if they do not give a more open active opposition. In addition to these, the licentiousness of the people on one hand, and sanguinary punishments on the other, will alarm the best disposed friends to the measure, and contribute not a little to the overthrow of their object.

“Great temperance, firmness, and foresight, are necessary in the movements of that body. To forbear running from one extreme to another is no easy matter: and should this be the case, rocks and shelves, not visible at present, may wreck the vessel, and give a higher-toned despotism than the one which existed before*.”

* Washington's Writings, vol. x. p. 40.

In the spring of 1793, Henry Lee, the Governor of Virginia, applied to Washington for his advice on the subject of taking service in the French army. That advice the President naturally refused to give; but he expressed strong doubts on the subject "As it might respect myself only, because it would appear a boundless ocean I was about to embark on, from whence no land is to be seen. In other words because the affairs of [France] would seem to me to be in the highest paroxysm of disorder; not so much from the presence of foreign enemies, for in the cause of liberty this ought to be fuel to the fire of a patriot soldier, and to increase his ardour, but because those in whose hands the government is entrusted, are ready to tear each other to pieces, and will more than probably prove the worst foes the country has*."

* Washington's Writings, vol. x. p. 344.

Henceforward, he maintained the strictest reserve in relation to the nations and the events of Europe ; adhering to the principles which had founded the independence and the liberties of America, animated by feelings of grateful good-will towards France, and eagerly seizing every opportunity of testifying them, but silent and constrained as if he laboured under a presentiment of some heavy responsibility which would devolve upon himself, and unwilling to pledge beforehand either his personal opinion, or the policy of his country.

When the day of difficulty arrived, when the declaration of war between France and England marked the outbreak of the great revolutionary contest in Europe, the determination of Washington was clear and instantaneous. He forthwith proclaimed the neutrality of the United States.

“It is well known that peace has been (to borrow a modern phrase) the order of the day with me since the disturbances of Europe first commenced. My policy has been, and will continue to be, while I have the honour to remain in the administration, to maintain friendly terms with, but to be independent of, all the nations of the earth ; to share in the broils of none ; to fulfil our own engagements ; to supply the wants and be carriers for them all ; being thoroughly convinced that it is our policy and interest to be so. Nothing short of self-respect, and that justice which is essential to a national character, ought to involve us in war ; for sure I am, if this country is preserved in tranquillity twenty years longer, it may bid defiance in a just cause to any power whatever, such in that time will be its wealth, power, and resources*.” “In a word I want an *American* character, that the powers of Europe may be

* Washington's Writings, vol. xi. p. 102.

convinced we act for *ourselves*, and not for others. This in my judgment is the only way to be respected abroad and happy at home ; and not, by becoming the partisans of Great Britain or France, create dissensions, disturb the public tranquillity, and destroy, perhaps for ever, the cement which binds the Union*."

" The way to effect this is to pursue a steady system, to organise all our *resources*, and to put them in a state of preparation for prompt action. Regarding the overthrow of Europe at large as a matter not entirely chimerical, it will be our prudence to cultivate a spirit of self-defence, and to endeavour by unanimity, vigilance, and exertion, under the blessing of Providence, to hold the scales of our destiny in our own hands. Standing as it were in the midst of falling empires, it should be our aim to assume a station and attitude

* Washington's Writings, vol. xi. p. 83.



which will preserve us from being overwhelmed in their ruins*."

At first the measure was generally approved. All minds were mainly actuated by the desire of peace, and the reluctance to give counsel by which that peace might be put in jeopardy. The Cabinet had been unanimous in favour of the principle of neutrality. But the news which arrived from Europe spread like gusts of flame. The coalition formed against France appeared to menace those principles which were the safeguards of the American people — the independence and internal freedom of nations. That coalition was headed by England—a power detested as a recent enemy, suspected as a former master. The orders and the measures of the British Government with reference to the trade of neutrals and the press of

* Washington's Writings, vol. xi. p. 351. Letter to the Secretary of War, respecting the arrangements for raising and organising the Provisional Army. December, 1798.

sailors, wounded the United States in their dignity as well as in their interests. Out of the great question of neutrality special questions arose, sufficiently dubious to supply a just ground, or at least a pretext, for diversity of opinions, and for an outbreak of conflicting sentiments. On some of these points, as for instance on the restitution of maritime captures, and on the manner in which the new minister then expected to arrive from France was to be received, the cabinet ceased to be unanimous.

That minister, M. Genet, landed ; and from Charleston to Philadelphia his journey was a popular ovation. Everywhere on his passage, the democratic societies, considerable in numbers and enthusiastic in their zeal, met to entertain and to address the new envoy : the public papers rapidly spread throughout the country accounts of these festivities, and news from France. The passions of the people were kindled. M. Genet, himself a man of strong passions, and carried away by a


headstrong desire of drawing the United States into a war in support of France, thought himself justified in every species of attempt, and able to command unlimited success. He distributed letters of marque, enlisted American subjects, armed privateers, condemned prizes, and exercised the powers of a sovereign, in that foreign country, on the ground of republican fraternity. Washington, who had been at first amazed and passive, soon resolved to act and to assert the rights of the supreme power of the nation ; but Genet engaged in an open contest with him, adhered to his own pretensions, resorted to abuse, fomented sedition, and even threatened to appeal to the people against a President who abandoned his duty and betrayed the general cause of freedom.

No ruler was ever more reserved than Washington in the exercise of his power ; more sober in his engagements and in his undertakings : but none, on the other hand, ever clung more firmly to

his word, to his purpose, to his rights. He was the President of the United States of America. In their name, and by virtue of their constitution, he had proclaimed their neutrality. That neutrality was to be as real and as much respected as his power. In five successive sittings, he laid before his cabinet the whole correspondence and all the documents connected with this strange contest, and the cabinet unanimously decided that the recall of M. Genet should be immediately demanded of the French Government.

Genet was recalled. In the opinion of the American public, as well as in the remonstrance to France, Washington had triumphed. The Federalists, indignant at what had occurred, rallied round the President. The pretensions and the violence of Genet had severed from him many members of the democratic party. Jefferson had not hesitated to give his support to the President against the

French envoy. A favourable reaction had begun, and the contest seemed to be at an end. But in government, as in war, some victories are dearly purchased, and still leave the danger to subsist. The revolutionary fever which had been revived in the United States, did not quit the country as easily as a fallen minister. Instead of that tendency to union of purpose, that subsidence of passion, that career of prosperity and general moderation, which had heretofore smiled upon the American Republic, two parties were at open warfare, more radically divided, more violently irritated, than they ever were before. The attacks of the opposition were no longer directed against the administration alone, against certain financial measures, or this or that controvertible use of the powers vested in the government by the laws. In that opposition, in the democratic societies, in the public press, amongst the foreigners who flocked into the country, there lurked a true revolutionary faction, eager to overthrow the institutions of



society and of the government, in order to reconstruct them on a different basis.

“A party exists in the United States,” (such was the account which Washington gave of them to M. de Lafayette in 1798) “formed by a combination of causes, which oppose the government in all its measures, and are determined, as all their conduct evinces, by clogging its wheels, indirectly to change the nature of it, and to subvert the constitution. To effect this no means which have a tendency to accomplish their purposes are left unessayed. The friends of government, who are anxious to maintain its neutrality, and to preserve the country in peace, and adopt measures to secure these objects, are charged by them as being monarchists, aristocrats, and infractors of the constitution, which according to their interpretation of it would be a mere cipher. They arrogated to themselves the sole merit of being the friends of France, when in fact they had no more regard for that

nation than for the Grand Turk, further than their own views were promoted by it ; denouncing those who differed in opinion (whose principles are purely American, and whose sole view was to observe a stout neutrality), as acting under British influence, and being directed by her counsels or as being her pensioners*.”

“ If the conduct of the leaders of the opposition is viewed with indifference, if there are activity and misrepresentation on one side, and supineness on the other, their numbers accumulated by intriguing and discontented foreigners under proscription, who were at war with their own governments, and the greater part of them with *all* governments, they will increase, and nothing short of Omniscience can foretell the consequences†.”

In the midst of this imminent danger, Jefferson,

* Washington's Writings, vol. xi. p. 378.

† Ibid. p. 390.




who was disinclined to involve himself more deeply in the contest, and who had given notice of his intentions six months before, though he had delayed the execution of them at the request of Washington himself, decidedly left the cabinet.

The crisis was formidable : a general ferment was spreading throughout the country ; the western counties of Pennsylvania violently refused to pay the tax on distilled liquors. In Kentucky and in Georgia, armed insurrections, perhaps incited by foreign influence, threatened to overrun Louisiana and the Floridas, and thus to involve the State, in spite of the government, in a collision with Spain. The war against the Indians went on, but it was still arduous and of doubtful issue. A new Congress had just met, respectful to Washington, but the House of Representatives was nevertheless more sparing of its approval of the foreign policy of the government, and a new Speaker was chosen, by a majority of ten, from

party of the opposition. Great Britain desired the maintenance of peace with the United States ; but either from her mistrust of the success of Washington in the system he pursued, or from the tendency of her policy in general, or from a feeling of disdainful arrogance, she persisted in, nay she aggravated, her measures against the trade of the Americans, whose irritation, on the other hand, went on increasing. “ It has not been the smallest of our embarrassments that the domineering spirit of Great Britain should revive again just at this crisis, and the outrageous and insulting conduct of some of her officers should combine therewith to play into the hands of the discontented, and sour the minds of those who are friends to peace, order, and friendship with all the world ; but this is by the by *.”

It was indeed by the by, and without the

* Washington's Writings, vol. xi. p. 63. Letter to John Jay.



slightest intention of availing himself of these circumstances either to lower his policy or to enhance his own merit, that he pointed out the obstacles thrown in his way ;—exempt alike from vanity and from irresolution, his anxiety was to surmount, not to display them.

At the very time at which the ascendancy of the democratic party seemed to be secure—when the Federalists themselves were giving way, and when certain stringent measures against England had been proposed in Congress, and would perhaps have rendered a war inevitable, Washington suddenly announced to the Senate, by a message, that he had just appointed Mr. Jay, one of the principal leaders of the Federalist party, envoy extraordinary to the Court of London, to open if possible a pacific course of negotiation on the subject of the differences between the two nations. The Senate immediately approved the appointment.

The annoyance of the opposition rose to its utmost height. War was their object, and still more a change of policy, as the consequence of war. Nothing was needed to bring about this result, but that affairs should remain in their present state. So excited was the public mind, so rapid the growth of bitter feeling, that a mere rumour from Europe, another outrage to the American flag, or the smallest incident, might be followed by the breaking out of hostilities. Washington, by his sudden determination, gave a different turn to events. The negotiation might be successful; at any rate it justified the government in waiting for the result. If it failed, the administration had still the power in its own hands of declaring and carrying on the war, without having to submit to a total extinction of its own policy.

In order to give to these negotiations the authority of a strong and firmly - established

government, Washington resolved, whilst he was baffling the hopes of his adversaries abroad, to repress their attempted disturbances at home. The resistance of some of the counties of the State of Pennsylvania to the tax on distilled liquors was grown into a revolt. He proclaimed his firm determination to ensure the execution of the laws; called out the militia of Virginia, Maryland, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania itself; formed an army, transported himself to the spot with the full intention of assuming the command in person if the contest proved serious, and did not return to Philadelphia until he was thoroughly convinced that the rebels would not sustain it. They dispersed at once before the army, and one detachment of the troops took up its winter-quarters in the country.

Washington tasted, upon this occasion, one of those stern but deep delights which fall, in free countries, to the lot of

man who bears unwaveringly the load of power. Throughout the country, and especially in the States adjacent to the insurrection, the well-affected citizens acknowledged the danger in which they stood, and their obligation to assist in person to maintain the laws. The magistrates were resolute, the militia ready; the strength of public opinion put to silence the hypocritical subtleties of the ringleaders of the revolt, and Washington performed his duty with the assent and the approbation of his country.


A slender compensation indeed for the fresh and severe trials which awaited him. About the same time his cabinet, his companions in labour and in fame, quitted him. The animosity of which Hamilton was the peculiar object continued to increase; and after having borne the brunt of it as long as the success of his plans and his own honour required, he at length retired, constrained to turn his thoughts at length to himself and to his

family. Knox followed his example : and Washington was surrounded by none but untried men, devoted indeed to his policy, but of far less weight of authority than their predecessors, when Mr. Jay returned from London, bringing with him the result of that negotiation, the bare announcement of which had excited so much uproar.

The treaty was far from satisfactory. It did not settle all the questions, it did not secure all the interests of the United States ; but it put an end to the chief differences between the two nations ; it ensured the complete execution, hitherto retarded by Great Britain, of the conventions concluded between herself and the Americans, when she acknowledged their independence ; and it paved the way to further and more favourable negotiations. Lastly, the treaty brought with it peace, the maintenance of a secure peace, to abate even those evils it still allowed to subsist.

Washington did not hesitate. He possessed the rare courage of holding fast to a main object, and of submitting without complaint to the imperfections and inconveniences of success. He immediately communicated the treaty to the Senate, and it was approved by that body, subject to one modification which was to be required of England. The question was still in suspense. The opposition attempted to make one extreme effort. Addresses were sent up from Boston, New York, Baltimore, George-Town, and other places, expressing dissatisfaction at the treaty and calling upon the President not to ratify it.

The populace of Philadelphia assembled riotously, marched through the town bearing the articles of the treaty on a pole, and burned them publicly before the house of the British Minister and the British Consul. Washington, who was gone to spend a few days at Mount Vernon, returned with all speed to Philadelphia, and con-



sulted the cabinet as to whether the treaty ought not to be immediately ratified, without waiting for the arrival from London of the alteration, which the Senate itself had declared to be necessary. The measure was a bold one ; and it was objected to by one member of the cabinet, Randolph. Washington proceeded, and ratified the treaty. Randolph resigned. The British Government assented to the proposed alteration, and ratified the treaty in turn. Still the execution of it remained, which required certain legislative measures and the interference of Congress. The struggle was renewed in the House of Representatives. Several times the opposition had a majority. Washington persevered in the name of the constitution, to which his adversaries appealed no less against him. At length, at the end of six weeks, in order to avoid a rupture of the peace, and from the general conviction that the President would be inflexible, the opposition being exhausted rather than defeated. the measures

required to carry the treaty into execution were passed by a majority of three.

In the country, in the public meetings, in the newspapers, the frenzy of party knew no bounds. Every morning, and from all directions, Washington was inundated with addresses of censure, anonymous letters, invectives, calumnies, and threats: even his integrity was scandalously assailed.

He remained unmoved; to the addresses he replied: "My sense of the treaty has been manifested by its ratification. The principles on which my sanction was given have been made public. I regret the diversity of opinion. But whatever qualities, manifested in a long and arduous public life, have acquired for me the confidence of my fellow-citizens, let them be assured that they remain unchanged, and that they will continue to be exerted on every occasion in which

the honour, the happiness, and welfare of our common country are immediately involved *."

And as to the attacks of the press, in the last letter which he appears to have addressed to Jefferson (1796), he says, "I may add, and very truly, that until within the last year or two, I had no conception that parties would, or even could, go the length I have been witness to: nor did I believe until lately, that it was within the bounds of probability—hardly within those of possibility, that while I was using my utmost exertions to establish a national character of our own, independent, as far as our obligations and justice would permit, of every nation of the earth, and wished by steering a steady course to preserve this country from the horrors of a desolating war, I should be accused of being the enemy of one

* Reply to the address of the inhabitants of Camille Orangeburg districts, South Carolina, Sept. 14th, 1795
Washington's Writings, vol. xii. p. 212.

nation and subject to the influence of another ; and to prove it, that every act of my administration would be tortured, and the grossest and most insidious misrepresentations of them be made, by giving one side only of a subject, and that too in such exaggerated and indecent terms as could scarcely be applied to a Nero, a notorious defaulter, or even to a common pickpocket. But enough of this ; I have already gone further in the expression of my feelings than I intended*.”

The better class of men however, the friends of order and of justice, did at length perceive that they were leaving their own noble champion undefended, exposed to the basest attacks. In free countries, mendacity may show its face, and it would be vain to affect to drive it into obscurity ; but it is the duty of truth also to raise its head, and freedom is a blessing upon no other terms. On


* Washington's Writings, vol. xi. p. 139. Letter to Jefferson.

the other hand, then, numerous and animated expressions of congratulation, of support, and addresses of thanks, were conveyed to Washington : and when the close of his second presidency was at hand, in all parts of the Union, even in those where the opposition seemed to predominate, a multitude of voices were raised to entreat him to accept for a third time the supreme power by the suffrage of his fellow-citizens.

But his resolution was fixed : he did not so much as allow it to be canvassed. Even yet, after the lapse of more than forty years, a theme of popular reminiscence, almost of popular emotion, remains in that memorable farewell address, in which, when he retired into the ranks of the community he had governed, he shed over it the last rays of his long wisdom.

“ In offering to you, my countrymen, these counsels of an old and affectionate friend, I dare

not hope they will make the strong and lasting impression I could wish ; that they will control the usual current of the passions, or prevent our nation from running the course which has hitherto marked the destiny of nations. But if I may even flatter myself that they may be productive of some partial benefit, some occasional good ; that they may now and then recur to moderate the fury of party spirit, to warn against the mischiefs of foreign intrigue, to guard against the impostures of pretended patriotism ; this hope will be a full recompense for the solicitude for your welfare, by which they have been dictated. Though in reviewing the incidents of my administration I am unconscious of intentional error, I am, nevertheless, too sensible of my defects not to think it probable that I may have committed many errors. Whatever they may be, I fervently beseech the Almighty to avert or mitigate the evils to which they may tend. I shall also carry with me the hope that my Country will never cease to view



them with indulgence; and that after forty-five years of my life dedicated to its service with an upright zeal, the faults of incompetent abilities will be consigned to oblivion, as myself must soon be to the mansions of rest.


“ Relying on its kindness in this as in other things, and actuated by that fervent love towards it which is so natural to a man who views in it the native soil of himself and his progenitors for several generations, I anticipate with pleasing expectation that retreat in which I promise myself to realize, without alloy, the sweet enjoyment of partaking, in the midst of my fellow-citizens, the benign influence of good laws under a free government, the ever favourite object of my heart, and the happy reward, as I trust, of our mutual cares, labours, and dangers*.”

Incomparable example of dignity and

* Valedictory Address. Washington's Writings,

consummate model of that respect for the public and for himself, which constitutes the moral greatness of a statesman !

Washington was right in retiring from the government. He had entered upon it at one of those periods, at once arduous and auspicious, when nations summon up whatever wisdom and virtue they may possess, to surmount the perils by which they are encompassed. He was admirably fitted for such a crisis. He shared in the opinions and feelings of his time, but he held to them neither fanatically nor servilely. The institutions, the interests, and the manners of bygone times inspired him with no hatred and no regret. His thoughts and his ambition plunged not headlong into futurity. The state of the community in which he lived harmonized with his tastes and with his convictions. He trusted in its principles and in its destinies, but his trust was enlightened and tempered by an unerring sense of the eternal principles of social order.



He served that community with sympathy and with independence, with that mixture of hope and fear which is wisdom in the things of this world as it is before God. Thence especially was he fitted to govern it ; for two things are needed by democracy to ensure its tranquillity and its success : it must feel itself loved and checked ; it must believe in the sincere devotedness and in the moral superiority of its leaders. On these conditions only, it may regulate the tendencies of its onward course, and may hope to take a place amongst the lasting and glorious forms of civil society. The honour of the American people is, that, at such a time, they understood and accepted these conditions ; the glory of Washington, that he was their interpreter and their instrument.

He did the two greatest things which, in politics, it is permitted to man to attempt. He maintained by peace the independence of his country, which he had conquered by war. He

government in the name of the principles of order, and by re-establishing their sway.

When he retired from public life, both these tasks were accomplished. He might then enjoy them. It matters little, in such high designs, at what cost of labour they have been perfected ; there are no drops of toil which are not dried by such a wreath, upon the brow where God has placed it.

He retired freely—he retired victorious. To the end, his policy had prevailed. He might still, had he so chosen, have retained the guidance of it: his successor was one of his most faithful friends, designated by himself. Nevertheless the times were critical. He had governed and triumphed for eight years—a long period in a young and democratic state. For some time past, a system of policy at variance with his own had been gaining ground. The American community seem

disposed to try new paths, more conformable perhaps to its natural direction. Perhaps the hour was come for Washington to quit the arena. His successor fell there; Jefferson, the leader of the opposition, took the place of Adams; and from that day to the present, the Democratic party has governed the United States.

Is this a good? is it an evil? could it be otherwise? Would the continuance of the Federalist party in power have been more advantageous? What have been the consequences to the country of the triumph of the Democratic party? Are they already consummated, or are they only begun? What transformations have the community and the constitution of America undergone under their dominion—what have they yet to undergo? To questions so immense, it can only be replied, that difficult to be resolved as they are, if I deceive myself, even by the people themselves, as a stranger they are assuredly inscrutable.

However this may be, one thing is certain : no other policy but that of Washington could have accomplished what he performed—the foundation of a free government at the close of a revolution, by public order and by peace. His was the unsullied glory of triumphing as long as he governed, and of leaving to his adversaries the possibility of triumphing, after him, without disturbance to the State.

More than once indeed, without shaking his composure, this result had occurred to his mind : “With me, a predominant motive has been to endeavour to gain time to our country to settle and mature its yet recent institutions, and to progress without interruption to that degree of strength and consistency which is necessary to give it, humanly speaking, the command of its own fortunes*.”

* Washington's Writings, Farewell Address, vol. xii. p. 234.

The people of the United States have indeed the command of their own fortunes. At that height Washington had placed his mark, nor did he fall short of it. Who has succeeded as he did? who ever saw his own success so nearly or so soon? Who ever enjoyed to such a degree, and to the end, the confidence and the gratitude of his country?

Yet, towards the end of his life, in the dignified, the sweet, the wished-for retirement of Mount Vernon, something of lassitude and sadness hung about the mind of a man so serenely great,—a feeling indeed most natural at the close of a long life spent in men's concerns. Power is a heavy burthen, and mankind a hard taskmaster, to him who struggles virtuously against their passions and their errors. Success itself cannot wipe out the sorrowful impressions which originate in the conflict; and the weariness contracted on

that scene of action is prolonged even in the bosom of repose.

It is a serious matter, in a free democratic community, to observe the repugnance of the most eminent men, and of the best amongst the most eminent, to assume the conduct of public affairs. Washington, Jefferson, and Madison longed ardently for retirement: as if, in that state of society, the task of government were too severe for those who are able to measure the extent of it, and who are resolved to fulfil it worthily.

Yet to such only is the task suited, to such ought it to be entrusted. Government will always and everywhere be the greatest employment of the human faculties, and consequently that which demands the loftiest spirits. The honour and the interest of society are alike concerned in drawing and fixing them to the administration of its

affairs ; for no institutions, no political contrivances, can fill the place they ought to occupy.

On the other hand, in men who are worthy of this destiny, all weariness, all sadness, though it be warrantable, is weakness. Their mission is toil ; their reward, the success of their works, but still in toil. Oftentimes they die, bent under the burden, before that meed is vouchsafed to them. Washington obtained it : he deserved and tasted success and repose. Of all great men, he was the most virtuous and the most happy : God has, in this world, no higher favours to bestow.

GUIZOT.

VAL RICHER,

September 1839.



APPENDIX A. PAGE 22.

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.

THE following remarks are appended by the American Editor of the Washington Papers to the letter quoted in the text; and they materially elucidate the designs of the principal colonial statesmen before the outbreak of the war.

It is not easy to determine at what precise date the idea of independence was first entertained by the principal persons in America. English writers, arguing from the conduct of the colonists, have commonly charged them with secretly harbouring such designs at a very early period. This is not probable. The spirit and form of their institutions, it is true, led them to act frequently as an independent people, and to set up high

claims in regard to their rights and privileges; but there is no sufficient evidence to prove that any province or any number of prominent individuals entertained serious thoughts of separating entirely from the mother-country till very near the actual commencement of the war of the Revolution.

Washington in his letter to Captain Mackenzie denies in very strong terms that such was the design of any persons, so far as his knowledge extended. No man, perhaps, was better informed on the subject by mingling in the society of others; and it may hence be confidently inferred, that the topic of independence was not openly broached by the members of the first Congress even in their private discourse among themselves. That he and his immediate friends had no such object in view, is manifest from a clause in the *Fairfax County Resolves*, passed on the 18th July preceding at a public meeting over which he presided. It is there stated as a cause of complaint, "that the British ministry are artfully prejudicing our sovereign and inflaming the minds of our fellow-subjects in Great Britain, by propagating the most malevolent falsehoods, *particularly that there is an intention in the American Colonies to set up for independent states.*" It was the opinion of Washington and of the framers of these resolves, that the colonies had the power, by withholding their support of British commerce, to inflict so much distress on the people of Great Britain, as to rouse the government to a sense of the colonial wrongs, and produce a speedy change in

their measures. And it was moreover supposed, that spirited resolutions, showing the almost universal sense of the people that the acts of the British parliament in regard to them were oppressive and unjust, would tend to hasten so desirable a result. Such were, no doubt, the views entertained by all classes of people, and the motives actuating them in the primary movements of the revolution.

The subject being somewhat curious, as well as interesting in its historical aspect, I thought it not amiss to obtain the impressions of Mr. Madison, who could not fail to have a vivid recollection of the popular feeling and principal events in Virginia at the period in question, and to know the sentiments of the political leaders. The following is an extract from his letter dated January 5th, 1828.

“ You wish me to say whether I believe, ‘ that at the beginning of the revolution, or at the assembling of the first Congress, the leaders of that day were resolved on independence.’ I readily express my entire belief that they were not ; though I must admit that my means of information were more limited than may have been the case with others still living to answer the inquiry. My first entrance on public life was in May 1776, when I became a member of the Convention in Virginia which instructed her delegates in Congress to propose the Declaration of Independence. Previous to that date I was not in sufficient communication with any under the denomination of leaders, to learn their sentiments or views on that cardinal subject.

"I can only say therefore, that so far as ever came to my knowledge, no one of them ever avowed or was understood to entertain a pursuit of independence at the assembling of the first Congress, or for a considerable period thereafter. It has always been my impression that a re-establishment of the colonial relations to the parent country, as they were previous to the controversy, was the real object of every class of the people, till despair of obtaining it, and the exasperating effects of the war, and the manner of conducting it, prepared the minds of all for the event declared on the 4th of July 1776, as preferable, with all its difficulties and perils, to the alternative of submission to a claim of power at once external, unlimited, irresponsible, and under every temptation to abuse from interest, ambition, and revenge. If there were individuals who aimed at independence, their views must have been confined to their own bosoms, or to a very confidential circle."

It was the belief, before the meeting of the Congress, particularly of the more cautious and moderate, that petitions to the King and Parliament by a body of representatives assembled from all parts of the colonies, would be respected, and in the end procure redress.

They, on the contrary, who, like Washington, had no confidence in the success of this measure, looked forward to the probable issue of arms, but still without any other anticipations than by a resolute vindication of their rights to effect a change in the conduct and policy of the British government, and restore the colonies to

their former condition. It was not till these petitions were rejected with a show of indifference, if not of contempt, that the eyes of all were opened to the necessity of unconditional submission or united resistance. From that time the word *independence* was boldly pronounced, and soon became a familiar sound to the ears of the whole people.

On the 10th of November 1775, Mr. Richard Penn, who had been governor of Pennsylvania and had left Philadelphia in the preceding July, was examined before the House of Lords while the petition from Congress, which had been brought over and presented by Mr. Penn in conjunction with the agents for the colonies, was under discussion. The following questions and answers occur in the examination:—

“*Question.* Are you personally acquainted with many of the members of Congress?”

“*Answer.* I am acquainted with almost all the members of the Congress.

“*Quest.* Do you think they levy and carry on this war for the purpose of establishing an independent empire?”

“*Ans.* I think they do not carry on the war for independency. I never heard them breathe sentiments of that nature.

“*Quest.* For what purpose do you believe they have taken up arms?”

“*Ans.* In defence of their liberties.”—*Parliamentary Debates, November 1775.*

It is a curious fact, that the ministers had at this moment in their hands two intercepted letters, written by Mr. John Adams in Congress, which expressed sentiments quite at variance with the testimony of Mr. Penn. These letters were dated on the 24th of July, only two weeks later than the petition to the King taken to England by Mr. Penn, which was approved in Congress on the 8th. They were intercepted in crossing the ferry at Newport and sent on board Admiral Graves's fleet, whence they found their way to Lord Dartmouth. The originals are now in the State Paper Office. One of these was from Mr. Adams to his wife, in which he said —

“The business I have had on my mind has been as great and important as can be entrusted to one man, and the difficulty and intricacy of it are prodigious. When fifty or sixty men have a constitution to form for a great empire, at the same time that they have a country of fifteen hundred miles in extent to fortify, millions to arm and train, a naval power to begin, an extensive commerce to regulate, numerous tribes of Indians to negotiate with—a standing army of twenty-seven thousand men to raise, pay, victual, and officer, I really shall pity those fifty or sixty men.”

The other letter was to James Warren, at that time Speaker of the Massachusetts Assembly, and contained the following declarations:—

“We ought to have had in our hands a month ago the whole legislative, executive, and judicial power of

the whole continent, and have completely modelled a constitution ; to have raised a naval power, and opened all our ports wide ; to have arrested every friend to government on the continent, and held them as hostages for the poor victims in Boston ; and then opened the door as wide as possible for peace, and reconciliation. After this, they might have petitioned and negotiated, and addressed, if they would. Is all this extravagant ? Is it wild ? Is it not the soundest policy ?”

With sentiments like these coming from a prominent member of Congress, it is no wonder that the ministry should be puzzled to reconcile the doctrines and assertions of the petition to the King, in which that body express their loyalty, and desire an opportunity “of evincing the sincerity of their professions by every testimony of devotion becoming the most dutiful subjects and the most affectionate colonists.” No charge of insincerity, however can attach to Mr. Adams. It is well known that he had little sympathy with the party who insisted on this last petition, and that he and others yielded to their associates, with the view of preserving peace and harmony within the walls of Congress, as the only means of ultimate union and success. At this stage of affairs they hoped nothing from petitions, and anticipated a remedy of evils from no other source than strong and determined measures on the part of the representatives of the people. Whatever may have been the opinions or wishes of other members of Congress, it is hardly possible that Mr. Adams could have

written the above letters without looking forward at least to the possibility of a speedy separation and an independent form of government. The fact of their being in the hands of the ministry when the petition came under the notice of Parliament, may serve as a key to some of the proceedings on the subject.

In tracing this matter farther, we shall find the opinions of Washington, Madison, and Penn, in regard to a scheme of independence among the colonists anterior to the beginning of the revolution, confirmed by other testimony of the highest order. In a letter which Dr. Franklin wrote to his son, dated March 22nd, 1775, he relates a conversation he had held in the August preceding with Lord Chatham, in which that statesman spoke of the prevailing belief in England, that the colonies aimed at setting themselves up as an independent state. "I assured him," said Franklin, "that having more than once travelled almost from one end of the continent to the other, and kept a great variety of company—eating, drinking and conversing with them freely,—I never had heard in any conversation from any person, drunk or sober, the least expression of a wish for a separation or a hint that such a thing would be advantageous to America."—*Franklin's Works*, vol. i. p. 278.

Again, Mr. Jay, remarking on certain parts of Botta's History of the American revolution, in a letter to Mr. Otis, January 13th, 1821, thus expressed himself: "During the course of my life, and until after the

second petition of Congress in 1775, I never did hear an American of any class, or of any description, express a wish for the independence of the colonies." "It has always been, and still is, my opinion and belief, that our country was prompted and impelled to independence by *necessity*, and not by *choice*. They who know how we were then circumstanced, know from whence that necessity resulted."—*Life of John Jay*, vol. ii. p. 412.

We have likewise the opinions, uttered on the same occasion, of two other persons not less qualified to judge than any that have been mentioned. "That there existed a general desire of independence of the crown," says Mr. John Adams, "in any part of America before the revolution, is as far from the truth as the zenith from the nadir." "For my own part, there was not a moment during the revolution; when I would not have given everything I possessed for a restoration to the state of things before the contest began, provided we could have had a sufficient security for its continuance."—*Ibid.* p. 416.

And Mr. Jefferson affirmed,—“What eastward of New York might have been the dispositions towards England before the commencement of hostilities, I know not; before that I never had heard a whisper of a disposition to separate from Great Britain; and after that, its possibility was contemplated with affliction by all.”—*Ibid.* p. 417.

This mass of testimony, derived from separate sources coincident in every particular, vouched by the

first names in American history, and the principal actors in producing a separation, is perfectly conclusive on this point. It is moreover established, as Mr. Jay has remarked, by all the public documents and proceedings of the colonial legislatures, in which assurances of loyalty and allegiance are uniform and cordial. Any opinion, therefore, that the spirit of independence had an early origin, and a progressive growth, with a direct aim to a separation, or the prospect of such an event, must be a mere inference, sanctioned only by the circumstances of the free institutions of the colonies, and the tendency of a people under such institutions to self-government and a system independent of foreign control.

The following curious and characteristic letter from John Adams to Richard Henry Lee was written in Congress, November 15th, 1775, nearly eight months before the declaration of independence. A copy was taken from the original by a merchant in Virginia, and forwarded to his friend in Glasgow, by whom it was transmitted to the British ministry. It is now in the State Paper Office.

"The course of events," says Mr. Adams, "naturally turns the thoughts of gentlemen in common to the subjects of legislation and jurisprudence; and it is a current problem, what form of government is most readily and easily adopted by a colony upon a sudden emergency. Nature and experience have already pointed out a solution of this problem in the choice of

conventions and committees of safety. Nothing is wanting, in addition to these, to make a complete government, but the choice of magistrates for the administration of justice. Taking nature and experience for my guide, I have formed the following sketch, which may be varied in any one particular an infinite number of ways, so as to accommodate it to the genius, temper, principles, and even prejudices of different people.

“A legislative, executive, and judicial power comprehends the whole of what is meant and understood by government. It is by balancing each of these powers against the other two that the effort in human nature towards tyranny can alone be checked and restrained, and any degree of freedom preserved in the constitution.

“Let a full and free representation be chosen for a house of commons. Let the house choose by ballot twelve, sixteen, twenty-four, or twenty-eight persons, either members of the house, or from the people at large, as the electors please, for a council. Let the house and council by joint ballot choose a governor annually or septennially as you like. Let the governor, council, and house be each a distinct and independent branch of legislation, and have a negative on all laws. Let the lieutenant-governor, secretary, commissary, attorney-general, and solicitor-general, be chosen annually by joint ballot of both houses. Let the governor with seven counsellors be a quorum. Let all officers and magistrates, civil and military, be nominated and ap-

pointed by the governor by and with the advice and consent of his council. Let no officers be appointed but by a general council. Let the judges, at least of the superior court, be incapacitated by law from holding any share in the legislative or executive powers ; and let their commissions be during good behaviour, and their salaries ascertained and established by law. Let the governor have the command of the army, militia, forts. Let the colony have a seal and affix it to all commissions.

“ In this way a single month is sufficient, without the least convulsion or animosity, to accomplish a total revolution. If it is thought more beneficial, a law may be made by the new legislature, leaving to the people at large the privilege of choosing their governor and council annually, as soon as matters get into a more quiet course. Adopting a plan similar to this, human nature will appear in its proper glory, asserting its own real dignity, putting down tyrannies at a single exertion, and erecting such new fabrics as it thinks best calculated to promote its happiness.”

APPENDIX B. PAGE 58.

AGRICULTURAL PURSUITS.

WASHINGTON's love of the study of agriculture and of practical husbandry ended only with his life. His papers contain ample testimony of the interest with which he treated of all matters connected with his farm; and the discussion of agricultural topics formed no inconsiderable part of his correspondence. The following letter may serve as a specimen*.

TO ALEXANDER SPOTSWOOD.

Mount Vernon, 13 February, 1788.


DEAR SIR,

I think with you that the life of a husbandman of all others is the most delightful. It is honourable, it is amusing, and, with judicious management, it is profitable.

* Washington's Writings, vol. ix. p. 323.

I am glad to find that your first essay to raise Indian corn in drills has succeeded so much to your satisfaction ; but I am inclined to think, unless restoratives are more abundant than they are to be found on common farms, that six feet by two will be too oppressive to your land. Experience has proved that every soil will sink under the growth of this plant, whether from the luxuriancy and exhausting quality of it, or the manner of tillage, or both, is not very certain ; because instead of two thousand four hundred and twenty plants, which stand on an acre at six feet apart with two stalks in a hill, as is usual in land of middling quality, you have three thousand six hundred and thirty at six feet by two single stalks. Whether the exposing of land to the rays of the sun in summer is injurious, is a question yet more difficult to solve than the other. In my opinion, it is ; but this controverts the practice of summer fallows, which, especially in heavy land, some of the best practical farmers in England contend for as indispensably necessary, notwithstanding the doctrine of Mr. Young and many others, who are opposed to them.

The reason, however, which induced me to give my corn-rows the wide distance of ten feet, was not because I thought it essential to the growth of that plant, but because I introduced other plants between them. And this practice, from the experience of two years, one the wettest, and the other the driest that ever was felt on my estate, I am resolved to continue, until the inutility



of it, or something more advantageous, shall point out the expediency of a change. But I mean to practise it with variations, fixing on eight feet by two as the medium or standing distance, which will give more plants by three hundred to the acre than six feet each way with two plants to the hill will do.

As my corn will be thus drilled, so between all I mean to put in drills also potatoes, carrots, and turnips alternately, that not one sort more than another may have the advantage of soil, thereby to ascertain the comparative quantity and value of each of these plants as food for horses and stock of every kind. From the trials I have made, under the disadvantages already mentioned, I am well satisfied that my crop of corn in this way will equal the product of the same fields in the usual mode of cultivation, and that the quantity of potatoes, proportionate to the number of rows, will quadruple the corn. I entertain the same opinion with respect to carrots: but being more unlucky in the latter, I cannot speak with so much confidence, and still less can I do it with respect to turnips.

From this husbandry, and statement of what I conceive to be facts, any given number of acres will yield as much corn in the new as they will in the old way, and will moreover with little or no extra labour produce four times as many potatoes or carrots, which adds considerably to the profit of the field. But here it may be asked, will the land sustain these crops, or

rather the potatoes, in addition to the corn? This is a question my own experience does not enable me to answer. The received opinion of many practical farmers in England is, that potatoes and carrots are ameliorators, not exhausters of the soil, preparing it well for other crops. But I do not scruple to confess that notwithstanding the profit which appears to result from the growth of corn and potatoes, or corn and carrots, or both thus blended, my wish is to exclude Indian corn altogether from my system of cropping; but we are so habituated to the use of this grain, and it is so much better for negroes than any other, that it is not to be discarded: consequently, to introduce it in the most profitable, or least injurious manner, ought to be the next consideration with the farmer.

To do this, some are of opinion that a small spot set apart solely for the purpose, and kept highly manured, is the best method. An instance in proof is adduced of a gentleman near Baltimore, who for many years past from the same ground has not made less than ten barrels to the acre in drills, six feet apart, and, if I recollect rightly, eighteen inches in the rows. But query, where the farmer has no other resource than the manure of his own farm, will not his other crops be starved by this extra allowance to the Indian corn? I am inclined to think they will, and for that reason I shall try the intermixture of potatoes, carrots, and turnips, or either, as from practice shall be found most

profitable, with my corn, which shall become a component part of some regular and systematic plan best adapted to the nature of my soil.

To societies which have been formed for the encouragement of agriculture is the perfection to which husbandry is now arrived in England indebted. Why then does not this country (Virginia, I mean) follow so laudable and beneficial an example? And particularly, why do not the gentlemen in the vicinity of Fredericksburg begin this work? Your lands are particularly well adapted to it. There are more of you in a small circle than I believe are to be found in the same compass almost anywhere; and you are well able to afford experiments; from which, and not from theory, are individuals to derive useful knowledge, and the public a benefit.


APPENDIX C. PAGE 91.

INLAND NAVIGATION AND IMPROVEMENTS.

WASHINGTON devoted the closest attention to the wonderful resources which the territory of the United States held in store for the people by whom they are inhabited. The following letter to Benjamin Harrison, the Governor of Virginia*, may be cited as a remarkable instance of penetration, by which he predicted the importance of the navigation of the Mississippi, the great line of western inland navigation, and even the *discovery of working boats against the stream, by mechanical powers principally.*

I shall take the liberty now, my dear Sir, to suggest a matter which would (if I am not too short-sighted a politician) mark your administration as an important


* Washington's Writings, vol. ix. p. 59.



era in the annals of this country, if it should be recommended by you and adopted by the Assembly.

It has long been my decided opinion, that the shortest, easiest, and least expensive communication with the invaluable and extensive country back of us would be by one or both of the rivers of this State which have their sources in the Apalachian mountains. Nor am I singular in this opinion. Evans in his maps, 'An Analysis of the Middle Colonies,' which, considering the early period at which they were given to the public, are done with amazing exactness, and Hutchins since in his Topographical Description of the Western Country, a good part of which is from actual surveys, are decidedly of the same sentiments ; as indeed are all others who have had opportunities and have been at the pains to investigate and consider the subject.

But that this may not now stand as mere matter of opinion and assertion, unsupported by facts (such at least as the best maps now extant, compared with the oral testimony which my opportunities in the course of the war have enabled me to obtain), I shall give you the different routes and distances from Detroit by which all the trade of the north-western parts of the united territory must pass ; unless the Spaniards, contrary to their present policy, should engage part of it, or the British should attempt to force nature by carrying the trade of the Upper Lakes by the river Utawas into Canada, which I scarcely think they will or could effect. Taking Detroit, then, (which is putting ourselves



in as unfavourable a point of view as we can be well placed in, because it is in the line of the British territory), as a point by which, as I have already observed, all that part of the trade must come, it appears from the statement inclosed that the tide-waters of this State are nearer to it by one hundred and sixty-eight miles than those of the River St. Lawrence, or than those of the Hudson at Albany by one hundred and seventy-six miles.

Maryland stands upon similar ground with Virginia. Pennsylvania, although the Susquehanna is an unfriendly water, much impeded, it is said, with rocks and rapids, and nowhere communicating with those which lead to her capital, has it in contemplation to open a communication between Toby's Creek, which empties into the Allegany River ninety-five miles above Fort Pitt, and the west branch of the Susquehanna; and to cut a canal between the waters of the latter and the Schuylkill; the expense of which is easier to be conceived than estimated or described by me. A people, however, who are possessed with the spirit of commerce, who see and who will pursue their advantages, may achieve almost anything. In the mean time, under the uncertainty of these undertakings they are smoothing the roads and paving the ways for the trade of that western world. That New York will do the same as soon as the British garrisons are removed, which are at present insurmountable obstacles in their way, no person who knows the temper, genius, and

policy of those people as well as I do, can harbour the smallest doubt.

Thus much with respect to the rival States. Let me now take a short view of my own; and being aware of the objections which are in the way, I will, in order to contrast them, enumerate them with the advantages.


The first and principal one is, the *unfortunate jealousy* which ever has, and it is to be feared ever will prevail, lest one part of the State should obtain an advantage over the other parts, as if the benefits of the trade were not diffusive and beneficial to all. Then follows a train of difficulties, namely, that our people are already heavily taxed; that we have no money; that the advantages of this trade are remote; that the most direct route for it is through other States, over which we have no control; that the routes over which we have control are as distant as either of those which lead to Philadelphia, Albany, or Montreal; that a sufficient spirit of commerce does not pervade the citizens of this commonwealth; and that we are in fact doing for others what they ought to do for themselves.

Without going into the investigation of a question which has employed the pens of able politicians, namely, whether trade with foreigners is an advantage or disadvantage to a country, this State, as a part of the confederated States, all of which have the spirit of it very strongly working within them, must adopt it, or submit to the evils arising therefrom without receiv-

ing its benefits. Common policy, therefore, points clearly and strongly to the propriety of our enjoying all the advantages which nature and our local situation afford us ; and evinces clearly that unless this spirit could be totally eradicated in other States as well as in this, and every man be made to become either a cultivator of the land or a manufacturer of such articles as are prompted by necessity, such stimulus should be employed as will *force* this spirit, by showing to our countrymen the superior advantages we possess beyond others, and the importance of being upon an equal footing with our neighbours.

If this is fair reasoning, it ought to follow as a consequence, that we should do our part towards opening the communication for the fur and peltry trade of the Lakes, and for the produce of the country which lies within ; and which will, so soon as matters are settled with the Indians, and the terms on which Congress mean to dispose of the land found to be favourable are announced, be settled faster than any other ever was, or any one would imagine. This then when considered in an interested point of view is alone sufficient to excite our endeavours. But in my opinion there is a political consideration for so doing which is of still greater importance.

I need not remark to you, Sir, that the flanks and rear of the United States are possessed by other powers, and formidable ones too ; nor how necessary it is to apply the cement of interest to bind all parts of the




Union together by indissoluble bonds, especially that part of it which lies immediately west of us, with the middle States. For what ties, let me ask, should we have upon those people? How entirely unconnected with them shall we be, and what troubles may we not apprehend if the Spaniards on their right and Great Britain on their left, instead of throwing stumbling-blocks in their way as they now do, should hold out lures for their trade and alliance? What, when they get strength, which will be sooner than most people conceive (from the emigration of foreigners, who will have no particular predilection towards us, as well as from the removal of our own citizens), will be the consequence of their having formed close connexions with both or either of these powers in a commercial way? It needs not the gift of prophecy to foretell.

The western States (I speak now from my own observation) stand as it were upon a pivot. The touch of a feather would turn them any way. They have looked down the Mississippi, until the Spaniards, very impolitically I think for themselves, threw difficulties in their way; and they looked that way for no other reason than because they could glide gently down the stream, without considering, perhaps, the difficulties of the voyage back again, and the time necessary to perform it in; and because they have no other means of coming to us but by long land transportations and unimproved roads. These causes have hitherto checked the industry of the present settlers; for except the de-

mand for provisions, occasioned by the increase of population, and a little flour which the necessities of the Spaniards compel them to buy, they have no incitements to labour. But smooth the road, and make easy the way for them, and then see what an influx of articles will be poured upon us; how amazingly our exports will be increased by them, and how amply we shall be compensated for any trouble and expense we may encounter to effect it.

A combination of circumstances makes the present conjuncture more favourable for Virginia than for any other State in the Union to fix these matters. The jealous and untoward disposition of the Spaniards on one hand, and the private views of some individuals, coinciding with the general policy of the court of Great Britain, on the other, to retain as long as possible the posts of Detroit, Niagara, and Oswego (which, though done under the letter of the treaty, is certainly an infraction of the spirit of it, and injurious to the Union), may be improved to the greatest advantage by this State, if she would open the avenues to the trade of that country, and embrace the present moment to establish it. It only wants a beginning. The western inhabitants would do their part towards its execution. Weak as they are they would meet us at least half way, rather than be driven into the arms of foreigners, or be made dependent upon them, which would eventually either bring on a separation of them from us, or a war between the United States and one or




the other of those powers, most probably with the Spaniards.

The preliminary steps to the attainment of this great object would be attended with very little expense, and might at the same time as it served to attract the attention of the western country, and convince the wavering inhabitants of our disposition to connect ourselves with them, and facilitate their commerce with us, be a means of removing those jealousies, which otherwise might take place among ourselves.

These, in my opinion, are to appoint commissioners, who from their situation, integrity, and abilities, can be under no suspicion of prejudice or predilection to one part more than another. Let these commissioners make an actual survey of James River and the Potomac from tide-water to their respective sources; note with great accuracy the kind of navigation and the obstructions, the difficulty and the expense attending the removal of these obstructions, the distances from place to place through their whole extent, and the nearest and best portage between these waters and the streams capable of improvement, which run into the Ohio; traverse these in like manner to their junction with the Ohio, and with equal accuracy. The navigation of the Ohio being well known, they will have less to do in the examination of it; but nevertheless let the sources and distances be taken to the mouth of the Muskingum, and up that river (notwithstanding it is in the ceded lands) to the carrying-place to the Caya-

hoga ; down the Cayahoga to Lake Erie ; and thence to Detroit. Let them do the same with Big Beaver Creek, although part of it is in the State of Pennsylvania ; and also with the Scioto. In a word, let the waters east and west of the Ohio, which invite our notice by their proximity, and by the ease with which land transportation may be had between them and the lakes on one side, and the rivers Potomac and James on the other, be explored, accurately delineated, and a correct and connected map of the whole be presented to the public. These things being done, I shall be mistaken if prejudice does not yield to facts, jealousy to candour, and, finally, if reason and nature, thus aided, do not dictate what is right and proper to be done.

In the meanwhile, if it should be thought that the lapse of time, which is necessary to effect this work, may be attended with injurious consequences, could not there be a sum of money granted towards opening the best, or, if it should be deemed more eligible, two of the nearest communications (one to the northward and another to the southward) with the settlements to the westward ; and an act be passed, if there should not appear a manifest disposition in the Assembly to make it a public undertaking, to incorporate and encourage private adventurers, if any should associate and solicit the same for the purpose of extending the navigation of the Potomac or James River ; and in the former case to request the concurrence of Maryland in the measure ? It will appear from my statement of the different routes



(and as far as my means of information have extended, I have done it with the utmost candour,) that all the produce of the settlements about Fort Pitt can be brought to Alexandria by the Youghiogany, in three hundred and four miles, whereof only thirty-one are land transportation, and by the Monongahela and Cheat Rivers in three hundred and sixty miles, twenty of which only are land carriage. Whereas the common road from Fort Pitt to Philadelphia is three hundred and twenty miles, all land transportation ; or four hundred and seventy-six miles if the Ohio, Toby's Creek, Susquehanna, and Schuylkill are made use of for this purpose. How much of this is by land I know not ; but from the nature of the country it must be very considerable. How much the interest and feelings of people thus circumstanced would be engaged to promote it requires no illustration. For my own part I think it highly probable that upon the strictest scrutiny, if the Falls of the Great Kenhewa can be made navigable, or a short portage be had there, it will be found of equal importance and convenience to improve the navigation of both the James and Potomac. The latter, I am fully persuaded, affords the nearest communication with the Lakes ; but James River may be more convenient for all the settlers below the mouth of the Great Kenhewa and for some distance perhaps above and west of it ; for I have no expectation that any part of the trade above the Falls of the Ohio will go down that river and the Mississippi, much less that the returns will ever come up them, un-

less our want of foresight and good management is the occasion of it. Or upon trial, if it should be found that these rivers from the before-mentioned Falls will admit the descent of sea-vessels, in that case and the navigation of the former becoming free, it is probable that both vessels and cargoes will be carried to foreign markets and sold ; but the returns for them will never in the natural course of things ascend the long and rapid current of that river, which with the Ohio to the Falls, in their meanderings, is little, if any, short of two thousand miles. Upon the whole, the object in my estimation is of vast commercial and political importance. In this light I think posterity will consider it, and regret, if our conduct should give them cause, that the present favourable moment to secure so great a blessing for them was neglected.

One thing more remains which I had like to have forgotten, and that is the supposed difficulty of obtaining a passage through the State of Pennsylvania. How an application to its legislature would be relished in the first instance, I will not undertake to decide ; but of one thing I am almost certain, such an application would place that body in a very delicate situation. There are in the state of Pennsylvania at least one hundred thousand souls west of the Laurel Hill who are groaning under the inconveniences of a long land transportation. They are wishing, indeed they are looking, for the improvement and extension of inland navigation ; and if this cannot be made easy for them



to Philadelphia (at any rate it must be long), they will seek a mart elsewhere; the consequence of which would be, that the State, though contrary to the interests of its sea-ports, must submit to the loss of so much of its trade, or hazard not only the loss of the trade but the loss of the settlement also; for an opposition on the part of government to the extension of water transportation, so consonant with the essential interests of a large body of people, or any extraordinary impositions upon the exports or imports to or from another State, would ultimately bring on a separation between its eastern and western settlements; towards which there is not wanting a disposition at this moment in that part of it beyond the mountains. I consider Rumsey's discovery for working boats against the stream by mechanical powers principally, as not only a very fortunate invention for these States in general, but as one of those circumstances which have combined to render the present time favourable above all others for fixing, if we are disposed to avail ourselves of them, a large portion of the trade of the western country in the bosom of this State irrevocably.

Long as this letter is, I intended to have written a fuller and more digested one, upon this important subject; but have met with so many interruptions since my return home, as almost to have precluded my writing at all. What I now give is crude; but if you are in sentiment with me I have said enough; if there is not an accordance of opinion I have said too much;

and all I pray in the latter case is, that you will do me the justice to believe my motives are pure, however erroneous my judgment may be in this matter, and that I am, with the most perfect esteem and friendship,

Dear sir, yours, &c.

The Assembly of Virginia voted to Washington fifty shares in the Potomac Company, and one hundred in the James River Company. Reluctant to accept the gift as an acknowledgment of his own exertions for the good of his country, or to have it regarded as a reward for the enlightened zeal with which he had promoted the great works of internal improvement, he ultimately bequeathed the property for the endowment of a College*.

* Vide Washington's Writings, vol. xi. p. 3.

APPENDIX D. PAGE 142.

OFFICIAL ETIQUETTE.

THE following extract from a letter to David Stuart of the 15th June 1790* gives a characteristic account of the President's own view of this notable dispute.

In a letter of last year, to the best of my recollection, I informed you of the motives which *compelled* me to allot a day for the reception of idle and ceremonious visits (for it never has prevented those of sociability and friendship in the afternoon, or at any other time); but, if I am mistaken in this, the history of this business is simply and shortly as follows. Before the custom was established, which now accommodates foreign characters, strangers, and others, who from motives of curiosity, respect to the Chief Magistrate, or any other cause, are induced to call upon me, I was unable to

* Washington's Writings, vol. x. p. 99.



attend to any business whatsoever ; for gentlemen, consulting their own convenience rather than mine, were calling from the time I rose from breakfast, often before, until I sat down to dinner. This, as I resolved not to neglect my public duties, reduced me to the choice of one of these alternatives, either to refuse them altogether, or to appropriate a time for the reception of them. The former would I well knew be disgusting to many ; the latter I expected would undergo animadversion and blazoning from those who would find fault *with* or *without* cause. To please everybody was impossible. I therefore adopted that line of conduct which combined public advantage with private convenience, and which in my judgment was unexceptionable in itself. That I have not been able to make bows to the taste of poor Colonel B. (who, by-the-by, I believe never saw one of them) is to be regretted, especially, too, as upon those occasions they were indiscriminately bestowed, and the best I was master of. Would it not have been better to throw the veil of charity over them, ascribing their stiffness to the effects of age or to the unskilfulness of my teacher, rather than to pride and dignity of office, which God knows has no charms for me ? For I can truly say, I had rather be at Mount Vernon with a friend or two about me, than to be attended at the seat of government by the officers of state and the representatives of every power in Europe.

These visits are optional. They are made without invitation. Between the hours of three and four every


Tuesday I am prepared to receive them. Gentlemen, often in great numbers, come and go, chat with each other, and act as they please. A porter shows them into the room, and they retire from it when they please and without ceremony. At their first entrance they salute me, and I them, and as many as I can talk to, I do. What pomp there is in all this I am unable to discover. Perhaps it consists in not sitting. To this two reasons are opposed; first, it is unusual; secondly, which is a more substantial one, because I have no room large enough to contain a third of the chairs which would be sufficient to admit it. If it is supposed, that ostentation, or the fashions of courts (which, by-the-by, I believe originate oftener in convenience, not to say necessity, than is generally imagined,) gave rise to this custom, I will boldly affirm that no supposition was ever more erroneous; for if I were to give indulgence to my inclinations, every moment that I could withdraw from the fatigue of my station should be spent in retirement. That it is not, proceeds from the sense I entertain of the propriety of giving to every one as free access as consists with that respect which is due to the chair of government; and that respect, I conceive, is neither to be acquired nor preserved but by observing a just medium between much state and too great familiarity.

Similar to the above, but of a more sociable kind, are the visits every Friday afternoon to Mrs. Washington, where I always am. Those public meetings, and a

dinner once a week to as many as my table will hold, with the references to and from the different departments of state, and other communications with all parts of the Union, are as much, if not more, than I am able to undergo ; for I have already had, within less than a year, two severe attacks, the last worse than the first. A third, more than probably, will put me to sleep with my fathers. At what distance this may be I know not. Within the last twelve months I have undergone more and severer sickness than thirty preceding years afflicted me with. I have abundant reason, however, to be thankful that I am so well recovered, though I still feel the remains of the violent affection of my lungs ; the cough, pain in my breast, and shortness of breathing not having entirely left me. I propose in the recess of Congress to visit Mount Vernon ; but when this recess will happen is beyond my ken, or the ken I believe of any of its members.

THE END.

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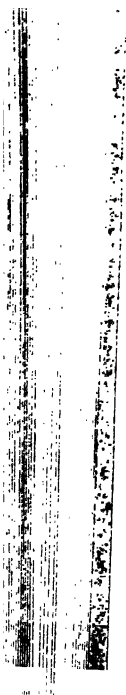
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